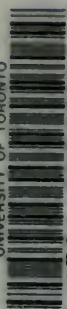



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THE APOCALYPSE

RIVINGTONS

London	<i>Waterloo Place</i>
Oxford	<i>High Street</i>
Cambridge	<i>Trinity Street</i>

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THE APOCALYPSE

WITH

Notes and Reflections

BY THE

REV. ISAAC WILLIAMS, B.D.

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

*"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"
"The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night"*

NEW EDITION

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RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1873

*“Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same
condemnation.”*

P R E F A C E

THERE is no book which we are so invited to read as the Apocalypse, and that with a blessing attached, “Blessed is he that readeth.” And perhaps it might with humility be suggested whether the unearthly beauty of this book, its divine simplicity and pathos, the wonderful arrangement of its parts, its deep and hidden analogies, its secret references to all the other Scriptures, and to different parts of itself, the poetical imagery and painting, challenging admiration and setting below it all the works of worldly genius,—whether all these things may not be intended to arrest our otherwise unwilling attention to matters so obscure and mysterious, subjects for the most part awful and sad, and truths from which our nature recoils. What St. Augustin often says of scriptural similitudes in general,¹ as calculated to move our interest and

¹ “Ad ipsam autem ignem amoris nutriendum et flatandum quodammodo, quo tanquam pondere sursum vel introrsum referamur ad requiem, ista omnia pertinent quæ nobis figurate insinuantur; plus enim movent et accendunt amorem, quam si nuda sine ullis sacramentorum similitudinibus ponerentur. Cujus rei causam

affections, and so lead on and attract us in the pursuit of truth, is especially the case with this book. For there is no book more engaging, even humanly speaking, in its composition: formed of images most striking and beautiful; philosophy clothed in Divine language, and replete with hidden harmonies of wisdom; and in its artistic structure so exquisite, that it has been well said,² “the very wit and artifice seems not to be human but angelical.” The style is such that men might speak of it as they did of the Prophet Ezekiel, “as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice.”³ There is no book which so repays the study of it from the manner in which it is interwoven throughout with all the other Scriptures, illustrating them and deriving light from them; and amply repaying all care and research with knowledge that satisfies. All these things seem as if they were intended to engage our attention in this book. And the same reasons of wisdom and goodness for which the Holy Spirit has so strongly invited us to this study, have no doubt induced the evil one to direct his arts to draw us away from it; nor is it strange that he who has laboured to render the sacrament of Divine love the great cause of strife in Christendom, should lead men to make this wisdom of God to appear “foolishness;”

difficile est dicere. Sed tamen ita se habet, ut aliquid per allegoricam significationem intimatum plus moveat, plus delectet, plus honoretur, quam si verbis propriis diceretur apertissime.” (Epist. lv. cl. ii. vol. ii. p. 203.)

² By Henry More.

³ Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

and this His guide for the dark days to be darkness itself.

Hence it has been the case that men usually shrink from the Revelation, deterred by the uses to which it has been applied ; while some are drawn to it by strong passions and prejudices ; or, it may be, with something of learned curiosity and speculation, rather than of godly fear ; feelings which at once render them incapable of that attention which the book so strongly challenges for itself. Or they read history, and then apply it to the elucidation of God's Word, which is to read the Scriptures backwards. Doubtless its higher meaning must be, as Dionysius of Alexandria says, an object of faith rather than of understanding ; for it contains throughout a sublimer sense than our faculties can reach. Hence it has been well observed that the Apocalypse is a very mortifying book to those who study it for the sake of intellectual speculation, but very satisfying to a heart studious of its precepts. This observation of itself indicates the right use of it.

With regard to "the secret things which belong unto God"⁴ He will, no doubt, in His own good time remove the veil for such as are worthy to understand ; when the spirit of the martyr or confessor, for whom it is more especially intended, will find therein the voice of God peculiarly suited to himself ; when strong oriental images and poetic figures can alone express the depth of his devout

⁴ Deut. xxix. 29.

convictions and aspirations ; here he will find the wings of the dove—"that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold,"—or rather, perhaps, the "two wings" of that "great eagle,"⁵ whereby his spirit is borne to the wilderness to be with God. In that time this living language and divinely-wrought symbolry will alone express his soul. When that dark evening of the world draws on, his heart will burn within him as God talks with him by the way ; and the fire thus kindled will throw its strong light on these figures, and bring them out in their own eloquence, their power, and fulness. In the meanwhile we may all, according to our degree, read with reverence, and after our measure understand.⁶

One great object in the study of the Apocalypse is the extraordinary light and interest it throws upon the whole of the Old Testament : there is hardly a passage which does not contain some allusion to an image or expression of the Prophets ; it will often furnish a key to the Old Testament itself, and brings it out as a new and expressive language to us of the last days and of all times ; it confirms the impression which the holiest of men have ever had, that the Scriptures, as the Word of God, are full of meaning, looking before and after with many eyes. It is not as Bishop Andrewes says, and as the mere historic interpreters suppose, that Daniel is the basis of these prophecies, but all the old Scriptures alike ; or if any one part

⁵ Rev. xii. 14.

⁶ Rev. iii. 22.

more than another, the Prophet Ezekiel. The Apocalypse itself fills every passage of the Old Testament with life; confirms the Patristic and Catholic mode of interpretation; makes the whole of Scripture harmonious and complete, crowning and perfecting, and bringing it home to us with universal application as altogether divine. Without it the Scriptures themselves were as a house without a roof. The Old Testament—the old Law lives again in a new and spiritual life; not embalmed and laid with reverential care aside in the grave, but arisen from the dead and alive for evermore, like its own Divine Founder.

The great characteristic of St. John is wisdom; but it is that Divine wisdom which is one with love, and inseparable from it. And hence the peculiar sweetness of St. John's style; we still recognize as it were the sound of the well-known voice to whose very tones we are familiar, and could mistake for no other. The Anointing from the Holy One overruns it all and goes down to the skirts of his clothing. And this, too, under great diversity of circumstances, which gives a marked variation to his style; while the strong individuality of the writer is not lost, but rather the more apparent under such change. In his Gospel and Epistles one idea is dwelt upon for many verses continuously; but throughout the Apocalypse, sometimes in almost every verse, and even more than once in the same, accumulate on one another images strongly defined and vivid, each starting forth as it were

separately into life; there is not only the marvellous eagle gaze on the sun, to which his Gospel is likened, but the rapidity of the eagle's wing over earth, Heaven, and sea, with plumage catching the varied light without end. The treasures of the unseen poured forth in all the riches of the visible; the jewels of earth, the stars of Heaven, sea, fountains, and rivers, and mountains, and hills, and every object of creation visible and invisible, called in to become witnesses and to take part as agents in the judgments of man; clothed with his sorrows, sympathising in his fall, and sharing his struggles, bright with his glory, glad in his successes. The kingdom of the Son of Man, to Whom all things in Heaven and earth do bow and obey; every thing that can stir the imagination of man—armies and their array, the battle, and the siege; every thing terrible in nature, the dragon and the beast—or imposing, as the lion and the eagle; the mightiest and the fairest of the objects we behold, the rainbow and the morning star. But, more than all, the Holy Scriptures themselves, the marvels of all history and prophecy, the sublimity of Job, the sweetness of the Canticles, sententiousness of the Proverbs, devotion of the Psalms, the mystery of the Law, the unveiled face and awful love of the Gospels, all find a place in this wonderful book.

Every fresh vision in the Apocalypse coincides and corresponds with other parts, not as already written or in the writer's mind, but as founded on existing realities of an

unseen world, and arraying anew parts of the same truths infinite in variety and extent; like a fresh turn of the kaleidoscope, it brings the same things to view in other combinations, forming thereby of the same materials a scene altogether new, while it confirms the truth of others, yet stands in itself independent and complete.⁷

It will appear at once from the general heads that the nature of the symbols is in itself interesting and easy of application, by taking Scripture itself for the interpreter. The seven Epistles to the seven Churches set forth the Presence of our Great High Priest in all His Churches, as dressing His lamps and tending on them in His temple, from His Ascension unto the end; then the seven Seals in succession suggest by their very name the history of the Church during the existence of the temporal Israel, while the great mystery of the call of the Gentiles continued as yet unrevealed, as St. Paul describes it, and gradually being made known, the Lion of Judah opening the successive Seals. Then the seventh Seal on the destruction of

⁷ "The more I read this wonderful book, the more I am convinced that the precision of the phraseology is little short of mathematical accuracy. The language seems highly adorned, but the ornaments are not redundancies. They are not of that sort, that the proposition would remain the same if the epithets were expunged. And, in passages which may seem similar, there never is the smallest variation of style, but it points to something of diversity, either in the subject or the predicate."—MS. Letter of Bp. HORSLEY, *Brit. Mag.* Apr. 1834.

Jerusalem expands into the seven Trumpets, as announcing the Gospel to the whole world and its progressive stages unto the end;—the proclaiming of the Jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord;⁸—surely an engaging hieroglyphic, symbols as simple and natural as they are striking and beautiful. And no less obvious is the interpretation of the Little Book eaten by St. John, as indicating the deeper knowledge of the Church's mysteries of which he is then made to partake. But all the symbols and allegories fall in and illustrate each other to such a degree as to require nothing but the thought and attention of an earnest mind conversant with scriptural interpretation, and divested, as far as may be in the fear of God, of unworthy conceit and near-sighted prejudice. The Jews said contemptuously of Ezekiel, after he had eaten of the prophetic roll, "Ah! doth he not speak parables?" but the reason was because they were a "rebellious house."⁹

St. John looked to the countenance of his Divine Teacher, did not cast it down to the historical developments below—his interpreter must do the same. The knowledge of the Blessed is said to consist in reading all external events of the world in the vision of God. It is in gazing into His holy Scriptures, not in the histories of

⁸ "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound in the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." (Lev. xxv. 9.)

⁹ Ezek. xx. 49; ii. 8.

the world, that men become divinely wise. The attitude of the learner must ever be that of one looking as for the morning watch, looking for what God may do, listening to hear what God will say.

The concluding words of Daniel are, "Blessed is he that waiteth !" And it does seem to be our great duty, with regard to prophecy, not to forestall and anticipate the things which are hidden in the hand of God ; but in the meanwhile to watch with what care we can the indications in Scripture itself of the meaning of His word : ever praying that as the Apocalypse is the most awful book in the world, God may preserve us from thinking any thing trifling of what is so great, any thing low on what is so infinitely high, any thing of mere human conceit on what is so Divine. And especially, with regard to the periods and dimensions of time, let us endeavour to learn the reverential caution of early writers, not rashly supposing that it is for us to know and accurately determine what was denied to Apostles, to Angels, and to the Son of Man Himself—"the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into His own power."¹

How reverential is St. Irenæus on the subject of the Apocalypse, fearing to suggest an explanation, lest such, being wrong, should undo the warnings of holy Scripture !² St. Augustin, in like manner, speaking of the mystery of iniquity and the power that letteth, says ; "I must confess

¹ Civ. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 53. ² Adv. Hær. lib. v. ad fin.

myself entirely ignorant. I will only mention the suspicions of which I have heard or read."³ St. Jerome (on Ezekiel) with the same diffidence, as only able by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual to surmise rather than explain," "*susplicari magis quam explanare.*"⁴ Such is the temper of mind one would wish to preserve. It has been the object of this volume not to speculate on the supposed fulfilment of the prophecies, so much as to study the book itself with the light of Scripture, without looking aside from it to what is or has been passing around ; to avoid the field of conjecture—the web of human imaginings by which the feet are entangled ; to adhere to the office of a commentator, and avoid intruding into that of the prophet:—remembering the counsel of the wise man, "seek not the things that are too hard for thee ; but what is commanded thee think thereupon with reverence."⁵

But as it has been impossible altogether to avoid a judgment on controversial subjects, it may be as well to state briefly the opinions here entertained on such leading points, from the internal evidence of the Scriptures themselves. That the Harlot Babylon is the state of Christendom as in the sight of God ; by a mysterious combination of good and evil, owing to the secret working of "the spirit of Antichrist," which is the Beast on which she is

³ *Civ. Dei*, lib. xx. cap. 19.

⁴ In *Ezek.* cap. i. 4.

⁵ *Ecclus.* iii. 22.

carried, or the great body of infidelity. That nevertheless this state of things called Babylon is the power that "letteth;" and when it has been destroyed by "the ten horns"⁶ or multitudinous powers of Antichrist, that then will be the great "overflowings of ungodliness"⁷ to which all things are tending, that "wicked one will be revealed," and "Satan unloosed for a short season."

That during the period of this Babylon, or, in other words, "the Holy City trodden under foot," the two Witnesses include the whole body of those who "confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;" that they are found throughout the Apocalypse under a great variety of figures—they are the sealed ones, the called, the white-clad army of Christ in heaven; they are sitting on thrones, they reign with Christ and partake of His power; and are never lost sight of through the whole period. But the object pursued has not been to dwell on these fulfilments so much as on the striking religious lesson pervading the whole. The awful retribution of God—the certainty of His judgments—the impossibility of escape—the everlasting peace of the good, their stable security amidst the changes of the world; their pleasures for evermore at the right hand of God; the beauty of their habitations, the unearthly charac-

⁶ Rev. xvii. 16.

⁷ The loosing of the Angels bound at the river Euphrates in the sixth Trumpet, and the drying up of the river Euphrates in the sixth Vial, and the burning of Babylon, these are all three at the issuing forth of the armies of Antichrist.

ter of their joys ; these pervade the whole with alternate unwavering light and shade.

An opinion maintained by so many wise and good men, as Bp. Andrewes, Dr. Jackson, Mede, and others, both in the Roman Communion and our own, that the Church of Rome is the Antichrist of Scripture, is not likely to be altogether without any foundation in truth ; but if it be the case that that Church, together with our own and others, is (not Antichrist, God forbid ! but) described as Babylon, and adulterous on account of an unholy alliance with the world, *i.e.* with the body of infidelity or “spirit of Antichrist,” this while it proves such their supposition to be erroneous, yet furnishes us with reasons to account for it. And further ; even such opinions as that of the Millennium, and of the rebuilding of the local and temporal Jerusalem, if the Apocalypse in this commentary is rightly understood, will be sufficiently accounted for, as but the faint earthly shadows, which are mistaken for their true fulfilments infinitely great, spiritual, and heavenly.

From the example of the Jews one might suppose that many correct notions of prophetic truth may be abroad, while men altogether fail in practically apprehending and embracing it ; nay, are entangled by their very knowledge, and made to fall thereby. “We have heard that Christ abideth for ever ;” here was a vast truth among the Pharisees, but what use did they make of it ? they were blinded by the very sun itself. It is remarkable how many great

truths they had in their mouths—that He should come at that very time ; that one should arise from the dead with great power ; that he should be of Bethlehem ; that no good thing should come out of Nazareth. Men may have got hold of a truth of God, though the handling of it were far beyond them ; awe and self-distrust should be our feeling in contemplating it ; not presuming to walk on depths where faith or a Divine hand must sustain us beyond nature.

It seems, moreover, a mistake to suppose that because a prophecy is not understood that its fulfilment must necessarily be future ; for the coming of Elias in John the Baptist had taken place, and yet would not have been understood but for our Lord's explanation. And so, likewise, with regard to our Lord Himself, the prophecies were long waiting to be understood after the fulfilment had taken place ; they had still longer to wait and work their way before they were generally acknowledged ; long only partially seen, and by some not even unto this day ; and therefore it does not necessarily follow that a predicted event is yet to take place because the prediction is still not understood. The "wise shall understand," yet not all ; and the wise who will understand may be but a small number. In the case of the Jews of old, the awful meaning of prophecy and its right interpretation lay much nearer their own doors than they imagined ; while they whose hands were yet fresh from the blood of "Elias which was to come," turned

over the pages of prophecy--and speculated--truth sounding in the ear, but delusion and blindness at heart, groping in darkness at noon-day at the very door. And the fault was altogether--not in the intellect, but in the heart. They understood not, because they loved not. And thus "the wisdom of the wise" and "understanding of the prudent" "came to nought," although replete with knowledge of interpretation and deeply versed in theological lore.

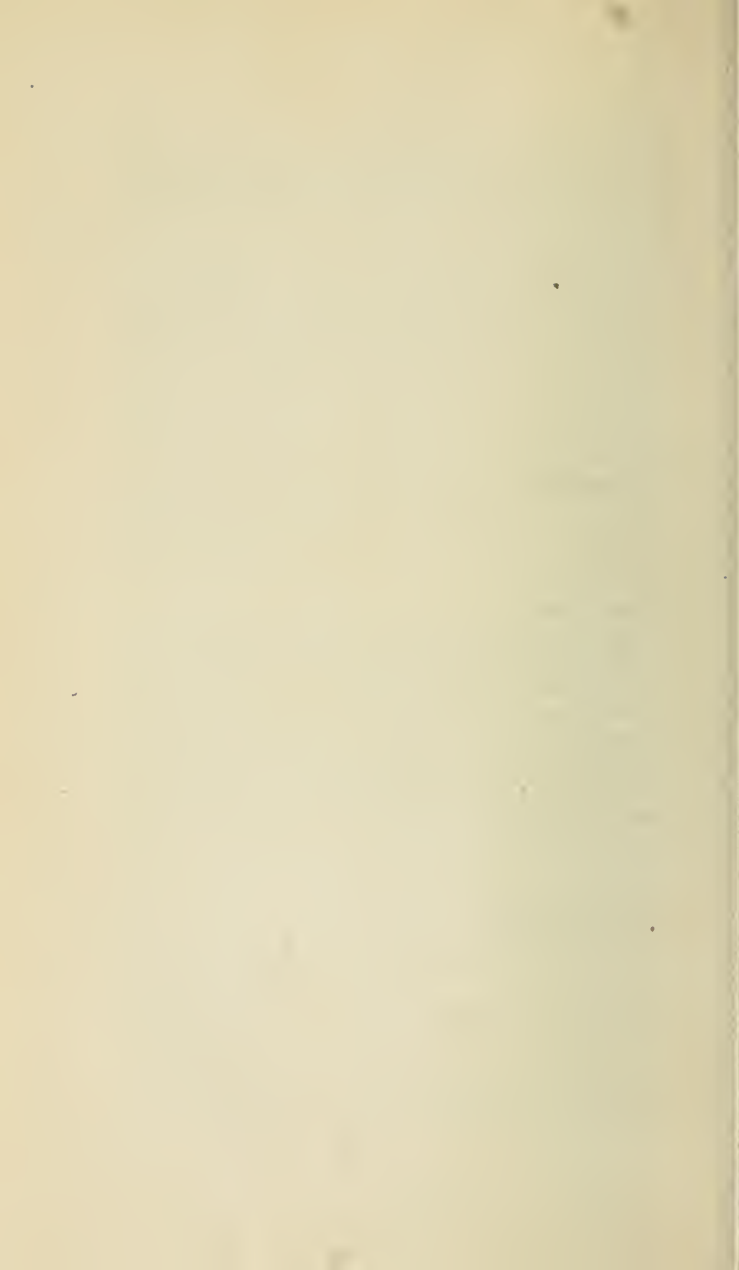
These are reasons for considering the matter as one rather practical and devotional than speculative. And the more so, as the Apocalypse itself leaves on one's mind a strong impression that it bears intimately in every part of it, in a most heart-stirring and pressing manner, on the individual reader, as much so, and, indeed, perhaps even more than any other part of Scripture. The way in which admonitory proverbs, personal warnings, and incidental precepts are interspersed throughout the whole of the book, would lead one of itself to apprehend that it has a close moral application and intention; in this respect differing in some measure from the historical and national prophecies of the Old Testament. And therefore nothing appears so much to be apprehended and avoided as any mode of interpretation which will put it far from ourselves. The fact that any line of exposition does not tend to practical edification is to the writer's mind a strong argument against its truth. It is not the guidance intended. Its terrors and warnings "enter in at the windows," "run upon the

wall," "climb up upon the houses;" it must be a carrying out of this its own individualizing home-searching nature that can alone be correct.

Wrong, therefore, as many of the points maintained in this volume doubtless are, yet the writer is of this most fully convinced, that in this direction alone the truth is to be found, viz. when the interpretation is made a matter for "instructing in righteousness," warning, and comfort; that every Christian is bound to make the Apocalypse a subject of study; and richly indeed by God's mercy would these labours be crowned, if the writer could but instil into others one spark of that love which he entertains for this most Divine Book.

The Text here given is according to our English Version, except in such cases as another reading has appeared more genuine, when it will generally be found to be that of Griesbach, as given by Dean Woodhouse; but in no instance have these been admitted without the test of further examination and inquiry.

STINCHCOMBE,
First week in Advent,
1851.



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PART I

The Great High Priest; or, Christ's Presence in His Church

SECTION I

THE TITLE

CHAP. I. “¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified *it* by His Angel unto His servant John: ²Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, such things as he saw. ³Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

“*THE Revelation of Jesus Christ*” is an expression which occurs more than once in Scripture of the final manifestation;¹ but as Christ's coming in His kingdom is in some sense even now, so is this His revelation of Himself. The Apocalypse is the mystery of Christ, or the mystical account of His kingdom from the day of Pentecost till the day of Judgment; not strictly predictive, but interweaving the past, present, and future as seen of God. There is a Divine dignity in the opening words, as in St. John's Gospel and general Epistle. “It is the Revelation, not of John,” says one,² “but of Christ.”

¹ 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 13; Luke xvii. 30.

² Cornel. à Lapide.

"Which God gave unto Him:" all is of the Incarnation, of God made man; that submission to the Father in the economy of man's redemption, of which our Lord delighted to speak, especially as mentioned in St. John's Gospel; of all being given Him by the Father, of His mission, of His receiving a command; of what He had seen and heard with the Father.

"And He sent and signified." From the Incarnation it passes to Apostleship, that on which the Gospel so much dwells: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."³ "*And signified*," i.e. showed by symbol and type, as the word occurs in St. John's Gospel (chap. xii. 33); "this He said, signifying"—expressing by figure and allegory—"what death He should die;" spake not in the language of men, but set forth in Divine hieroglyphic. And "*by His Angel*"—that we suppose not these to be manifestations of Christ Himself as we behold Him "face to face" in the Gospels; but rather as in the Old Testament, "by angels in the hand of a Mediator."⁴ All is of the beautiful order and harmony which is in Heaven; which God gave unto Christ, and Christ to His Angel; His Angel to John, and John to the Churches. It is Apostolic, and not that only, but also Angelic and Evangelic.

"*To His servant John*"—on account of his chaste life, says Bede. To Daniel and to John, to the pure in heart, are the visions of God. Again, our Lord says, "I have called you friends, for all things I have made known unto you." Thus to Abraham, "the friend of God;" thus to Daniel, the greatly beloved; to John, the beloved disciple, were revealed what God was about to do. "*Who bare record*"—the characteristic of St. John, the bearing wit-

³ John xx. 21.

⁴ Gal. iii. 19.

ness, which so often occurs in his Gospel and Epistle—*“of the word of God,”* the more general expression, and *“the testimony of Jesus Christ;”* as combining the Old and New Testaments, and that under the new form of Prophetic vision, according to *“whatever things he saw.”* Aretas compares this with the termination of his Gospel: *“This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”*⁵

The Apostle does not commence, observes Aretas, as in his Gospel and Epistle, by dwelling on Christ's Divine attributes, but on His humble estate, as showing the Divine and Human in one and the same Christ. While by the ministering Angel and His “servants” that are instructed, he shows His greatness and Godhead.

“Blessed is he that readeth”—he who in devout meditation gives himself to the reading of this book: it is, as Cornelius says, the very marrow of the Gospel. Nay, it has a special invitation as to a gracious privilege, declared by him who lay on his Saviour's breast; who prayed for the consummation in the contemplation of this awful vision. His face partook of the glory on which he gazed, though to our weak sight he has veiled the same in parable. There is a deeper knowledge often appealed to; but even to the unlearned the very reading and hearing is blessed; the ears catch the sound of unearthly wisdom, and the heart is soothed and sobered. The Divine words are as a healing charm, says Origen, to the soul, though the mind perceives it not.⁶ But here, says Aretas, it adds the keeping also of what we hear; that practical hearing which the Lord speaks of as having “ears to hear.” Every revelation implies a mystery: it is a revelation as far as it

⁵ John xxi. 24.

⁶ Philocal. xii.

is made known, a mystery in what is not made known; it has a bright and a dark side. It is a revelation, and therefore to be understood; but a mystery, and therefore requiring spiritual apprehension. It is, again, a "prophecy," and therefore not to be fully known but in the fulfilment; but in the meanwhile, according to the illumination of faith, as "a light shining in a dark place, until the day star arise" in the heart. For the blessing is for the keeping of the sayings; and if to be kept, therefore, as Henry More observes, to be understood. Add to which, that a mystery is usually introduced by encouragement to the study of it, as our Lord's expressions often intimate: "Let him that readeth understand," and the like. It is here implied that the study of it is a duty. St. Paul says that the children of light shall know the signs; St. John, "Blessed is he that readeth."

"For the time is at hand." "That is," says Aretas, "the time of this blessedness of which he speaks. And the time appears short, as to the patriarch Jacob, who in persevering seven years for his wife esteemed it but a day. Or the time is near, in that the littleness of this present life is measured by the side of that never-ending life which is to be hereafter." "This is no ordinary mode of speech, but the measuring of what is human with that which is Divine; by which things that take place in long periods of time and a thousand years are esteemed but 'as yesterday, or as a watch in the night.'" "They must soon come to pass," *i.e.* in this present time, says Bede. This is the time of their fulfilment, as ever fulfilling and being fulfilled.

Striking and wonderful is this warning, pervading the whole, yet ever breaking forth in each part, and singling out each individual with a Divine mysterious significance:

"Behold, I come quickly." Thus in the general Title it is stated, "these things must shortly come to pass;" and again, in the third verse, "for the time is at hand." So in the last chapter, "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this book." And again at the close repeated (chap. xxii. 7, 12, 20). Thus, also, when the forces of good and evil are mustering for the last great conflict, in the midst of the sublime description, the mystical array and din of the armies of Armageddon, suddenly, for the pause and interval of one verse, the Spirit takes the reader aside, and whispers, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth" (chap. xvi. 15).

This speedy coming of the last Day is according to the mind of Christ, to which we shall come so far as we know the truth more and more in this life, and all of us when relieved from the body.

SECTION II

THE SALUTATION

CHAP. I. "⁴John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; ⁵And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶And hath made us a kingdom, priests unto God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"*John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*" First to the seven metropolitan churches, and in them to all other churches in the Lydian Asia, the patriarchate of St. John; and from thence to all churches then in

the world; and thence to those of all time. It is the Catholic Church, and Christ is walking in the midst unto the end, according to His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." For such is the signification of this mystical number Seven. The number of forgiveness of sins; of the sevenfold power of the Spirit; of the rest of Christ hallowing the works of man; this perishable world of the six days admitted to the never-ending Sabbath of God. The "seven pillars" of the house which Wisdom hath builded.¹ The seven born of her that was barren, as Hannah speaks.² "Through these seven churches," says Bede, "he writes to every church. For by the number seven is denoted universality, as the whole period of the world revolves in seven days." "It is not that the Church of Christ was then only in these places, but in the sevenfold number consists all fulness. In Divine mystery the genus corresponds with the species. For the Apostle Paul writes to seven churches, but not to the same churches as John." Andreas likewise and Aretas, "The multitude of churches in every place, of all dwelling in this life, comprised in circuits of the seven days." "The sevenfold number of this perishable world combined with the Sabbatical rest and the life to come. Wherefore there are seven heavens, and seven angels pre-eminent over the rest, as the great Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, hath written." Berengaudus says, "The one Catholic Church." St. Chrysostom, "The seven churches are all churches on account of the seven Spirits."³ St. Augustin too, that by the seven is signified the perfection of the Church universal; and that by writing to the seven he shows the fulness of one.⁴

¹ Prov. ix. 1.

² 1 Sam. ii. 5.

³ Apud Cornel. à Lapide.

⁴ Civ. Dei, xvii. iv.

“*Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.*” The grammatical inaccuracy in the Greek here, as in other places, adds to the sublimity of the Divine language, as Christ’s raiment on the mount pervaded by light beyond the power of art. It is the name of God given to Moses on a like occasion of calling the Church out of Egypt,⁵ as indicating “the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”⁶ For this Name is the very foundation of eternity. The “I AM,” indeed, contains in itself the three tenses, as it expresses the immutability of the Divine nature; but on account of changeable periods of time in which our mortality exists, we say, He hath been, He is, and He shall be.⁷ But of course there is some reason for this change in the Apocalypse; and the three-fold expression may contain a reference to the Trinity. Aretas suggests that this name may apply to each of the Three Persons of the Godhead: “*Which is,*” of the Father, as spoken in Exodus; “*Which was,*” of the Son, as in St. John’s Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word,” and in his Catholic Epistle, “Which was from the beginning;” and “*Which is to come,*” of the Holy Spirit, not only as sent from the Father on the day of Pentecost, but ever present with those worthy to receive Him, and through holy Baptism. Or, indeed, the three expressions might be understood of Christ, as existing in the beginning; as revealed in the Incarnation; as yet to come from heaven; “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”⁸ Aretas speaks of St. Gregory applying the expression to the Son, when they afterwards occur in the Divine hymn (chap. xi. 17); and that they might be explained of each

⁵ Exod. iii. 14.

⁶ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

⁷ Aug. in Joan. xxxviii. 10.

⁸ Heb. xiii. 8.

Person of the Godhead, "as is manifestly the case with the Seraphic Trisagion, which in the Gospels we learn is addressed to the Son;⁹ by St. Paul in the Acts (xxviii. 25) is referred to the Holy Spirit; and in the traditional use in the unbloody sacrifice, to the Father." If indeed it be taken in any such sense of the Godhead generally, we must understand it in distinction from Christ afterwards spoken of as Man; but it seems better to consider it as spoken of the Father. Aretas explains it likewise in this sense; as also Bede, Berengaudus, Alcazar, and others.

"And from the seven Spirits which are before His throne:" i.e. the Holy Spirit, not absolutely, but in reference to His manifestations and gifts, as spoken of in Isaiah (chap. xi. 2), and as descending on the Son of Man in His Church; expressed afterwards as the "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" (chap. iv. 5), the "seven horns and seven eyes" of the Lamb, "which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (ch. v. 6), of which the prophet Zechariah had spoken. And from this the sacred Seven, which represents the Holy Ghost, it follows that there are also "seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints,"¹ and, as seen in this book, with the seven trumpets (chap. viii. 2), and with the seven vials (chap. xvi. 1). Hence also the seven churches with their seven bishops, and the like throughout. From the sevenfold Holy Ghost all is sevenfold in the Church. It is applied to the Holy Spirit from the universality, the plenitude and perfection of that number. So is it understood by St. Augustin,² St. Cyprian, and others.

⁹ John xii. 41.

¹ Tobit xii. 15.

² Civ. Dei, xi. xxxi.

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness." The Holy Spirit in His manifestations, and Christ not as God, but as God and man Who died. And as this book is all of martyrdom, so Christ is here titled "the Martyr," or "the Witness," the name by which He afterwards exhorts the lukewarm Laodiceans, "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."³ "The eternal Father and the sevenfold Spirit," says Bede; "and the Son He mentions in the third place as about to say more concerning Him. He names Him the last as being Himself both the First and the Last, and as having already mentioned Him in speaking of the Father as He which is to come." *"The first-begotten of the dead."* As St. Paul says, "The Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead."⁴ "Bearing witness unto death as man," says Aretas, "by His own inherent power as God He arose again, and was the first to begin that new life, never-ending and everlasting, which from Him and through Him is hoped for." *"And the Prince of the kings of the earth."* This is added to His resurrection; for it is on His rising again He says, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."⁵ And it is as the Apostle speaks, says Bede, who, on expressing the shame of the Cross, adds, "therefore God hath very highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name." Indeed, this book is altogether of this His Kingdom of Heaven established among the kingdoms of the earth; "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands;" His Kingdom whom "all dominions shall serve and obey."⁶

As St. Paul seldom mentions the Divine name without expressions of adoration, so here the sentence, beginning

³ Rev. iii. 14.

⁴ Col. i. 18.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 18.

⁶ Dan. ii. 45; vii. 27.

with benediction from God, turns into thanksgiving: "*To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings;*" or, as it is in the best ancient manuscripts, and in Aretas, Bede, and others, "*hath made us a kingdom, and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*" Thus the subject of the worship in Heaven is, because He which is, and was, and is to come, hath taken His Kingdom (chap. xi. 17). This, therefore, is in some sense that "first resurrection" which is afterwards spoken of under the same terms, "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (chap. xx. 6). It is in contemplating himself and us as already in this resurrection that St. John cannot withhold his thanksgiving and worship. This is the "manifold more in this present time, with persecutions." As priests doing service in perpetual Sabbath of the first resurrection, whose robes are white as on the day of the Atonement, washed white in blood (chap. vii. 14), the water and the blood of the two Sacraments. It is the fulfilment of the promise, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests."⁷ Or, as St. Peter gives the same from the Septuagint version, "a royal priesthood," "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices."⁸ This Bede beautifully explains, that "since as King of kings, and a heavenly Priest, by offering Himself for us He hath united us to His own body, no one of the saints is without the office of a spiritual priesthood, as being a member of the everlasting Priest."

"⁷ Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which have pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. ⁸ I am the

⁷ Exod. xix. 6.

⁸ 1 Peter ii. 5, 9.

Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

"Behold, He cometh with the clouds." It is "shortly to come to pass;" "the time is at hand;" yea, even now He "which is to come" is seen coming "with the clouds," as so often described.⁹ "*And every eye shall see Him*"—no more a God that hideth Himself;¹ but, as Job hath testified, "whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold" (chap. xix. 27). *And such as have pierced Him*, as He Himself declared before Caiaphas; yet not the few only who took part on Mount Calvary, but all they that crucify the Son of God afresh; they of that mystical Jerusalem, called Sodom and Egypt, in which the Lord was crucified. "*And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. Even so, Amen.*" "Mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself."² Hence the awful sadness of this book, and bitterness to the heart within. "They that pierced Him"—the Jews; the tribes of the earth—the Gentiles; both comprised in that Jerusalem of the Prophet: "I will pour upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn."³ The "*pierced*" is peculiar to St. John's testimony.⁴ Or the tribes of the earth may signify the desolation of the earthly-minded, as "the earth" frequently implies in this book. The emphatic language of the whole passage marks it as the fulfilling of Daniel: "One like the Son of Man," as He is afterwards here called (ver. 13), "came with the clouds of Heaven; and there was given Him an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away."⁵

⁹ See Holy Week, pp. 294-297.

¹ Isaiah xlv. 15.

² Job xlii. 6.

³ Zech. vii. 10.

⁴ John xix. 34.

⁵ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," that is, the Beginning and End, *"saith the Lord God ;"* He *"which is, and which was,"* even *"the Ancient of Days," "and which is coming, the Almighty."* The very words of the worship in Heaven under the seventh trumpet (chap. xi. 17). "It is the same expression," says Bede, "which he had used of the Father. For God the Father both cometh, and will come, in the Son." And Aretas, "showing the words applicable to each Person of the Godhead." The simple solemnity of expression in all this is unspeakably sublime, and peculiar to St. John, being the same at the opening of his Gospel and Epistle, and occurring throughout on like occasions ; it is altogether his own.

SECTION III

VISION OF CHRIST, OUR HIGH PRIEST

CHAP. I. "9 I John, your brother, and companion in the tribulation, and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven Churches ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

"In the tribulation, and kingdom and patience." Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God ; for it is the kingdom of the Cross. But the word "patience" is much to be noticed as applied so often to the Christian Kingdom, especially whenever the last Day is spoken of ; it implies, that though in reality so soon, as just before expressed, yet that it will appear long in coming ; "in your patience possess ye your souls ;"

“patient abiding” is the one great requisite in the latter days.¹ “*In the island called Patmos ;*” where St. John was exiled. It was under Domitian, according to Eusebius. Eusebius states it from Irenæus, that “it was seen at the end of Domitian’s reign.” But Epiphanius more than once speaks of this banishment being in the time of Claudius Cæsar, which would place it before the destruction of Jerusalem. Without entering into all the discussions on this point, which leave the matter uncertain, we may observe that there is something in the impressive and mournful solemnity of this book which seems to characterize it as the last of St. John’s writings. The very circumstances under which it is written partake of the Cross, in exile, in bonds, and, as it is said, in the labour of the mines. But the Gospel is not bound ; it spreads more freely for such chains. And the Cross, too, is here the mutual bond of sympathy. “Thus Jacob, when fleeing from Esau, saw God at Bethel ; Moses in exile saw God in the burning bush ; Ezekiel, when captive in Babylon, saw Him in the cherubic car ; Stephen, when stoned, saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”² Thus also Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Elijah in flight at Mount Horeb, were admitted to visions of God.

“*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day ;*” the day of Light, of Resurrection, of Pentecost, the day of Divine manifestations. “*And I heard a great voice behind me, as of a trumpet ;*” “with a piercing, thrilling sound, as extending to all the Church,” says Aretas. Rather, it may be, not merely loud, but with something in it of solemn mystery that connected it with the Law and the Mount Sinai, and the trumpet sanctified to Divine import.³ It

¹ See Holy Week, pp. 262, 263.

² Cornel. à Lapide.

³ Num. x. 1-10.

speaks at once of the Jerusalem, old and new ; and therefore it is from "behind;" for all the symbols and references are to be sought for in the Old Testament. Add to which, that of this Evangelical teaching it is said, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way."⁴ A trumpet as of the Law ; but articulate with human utterance as of the Gospel. "A voice as of a trumpet, saying, *What thou seest, write in a book, and send unto the seven Churches.*" The seven Churches then mentioned occur in the order in which they are found from the coast in that Proconsular Asia, or may have been the chief metropolitan Churches ; but this is of little moment ; they serve to make up the mystical seven of the Church Catholic. There is a peculiar interest attached to these Epistles, as differing from anything else in Holy Scripture, inasmuch as they consist of our Lord's own words after His ascent to Heaven, addressed to Churches established, and baptized Christians, more near the condition of ourselves now, than other persons primarily appealed to in Scripture ; most of the persons addressed having been, like ourselves, baptized in infancy, and now grown up to manhood. The same may be said of the Apocalypse generally, the last voice from Heaven. The Law is mostly to the Jew ; the Prophets to Israel ; the Gospel to individuals ; the Apostolic Epistles to Churches forming ; but the Revelation is to all of these ; the Jew, "which is one inwardly," the true Israel of God, to Churches already formed, and existing in strength or weakness, and to individuals like ourselves in such Churches.

"¹² And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks ; ¹³ And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of Man,

⁴ Isaiah xxx. 21.

clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴ His head and *His* hairs *were* white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes *were* as a flame of fire; ¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ And having in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth going forth a sharp twoedged sword, and His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength."

"*I turned to see the voice;*" not to hear, but to see; the expression, as Aretas observes, is spiritual and mystical, as indicating that the vision was not in the senses, but in the Spirit. "I turned to look," says St. John, for the very appearing of our Lord Himself in connexion with those Churches He had mentioned indicated all; for every symbol then beheld spake His language to the Churches. Again, his turning to look is an important lesson to ourselves, when we would understand the Apocalypse; we are to look, not before, but behind; we are to look, not away to the future objects of which He speaks—for this has been the error of interpreters—we are not merely to meditate within on His words, but we are to look to Him that speaks. This is the key to the understanding of its mysteries; it is on the face of Jesus Christ we are to fix our eyes, and thence to learn. Let us gaze on the symbols of His Presence till they give out their meaning; on the veil till we see the rays through it.

"*Seven golden candlesticks.*" For the one golden candlestick of the Law⁵ becomes seven in the Church universal; as, instead of the single trumpet of Mount Sinai giving out the Law, we have the seven trumpets which introduce the Gospel. "One *like* unto the Son of Man;" not as seen in the Gospels, but one *like*, as in angelic symbolic vision: as Daniel said, "one like the similitude of the

⁵ Exod. xxiv. 31; Zech. iv. 2.

sons of men ;”⁶ but it is more than that, the beloved Name with which Christ designated Himself, and known by the beloved disciple even as he had seen Him glorified on the Mount. The Son of Man *in the midst*, not merely as tending on them, but expressive of His tabernacling in the flesh, and walking in the midst of us : “I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God.”⁷ “There am I in the midst of them.”⁸ In this first vision is set forth, in a manner very wonderful, Christ’s Presence and watchful visitation of all His Churches, under every possible variety of circumstance, not merely as by His natural Providence in the care of nations, but by some one of His own attributes in the Incarnation, walking amidst the golden candlesticks, watching and tending them. The candlesticks for Metropolitan Churches, and the lamps therein for the Churches in connexion, or individuals like lights in the same. “*Clothed with a garment down to the feet,*” that is, in the raiment of a Priest. Our own High Priest, coming forth, as it were, from the old dispensation, yet not of the order of Levi, but of Melchizedek, “having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ;” the Ancient of days ; and therefore with white hair. It is the robe of white linen, the priestly robe of expiation,⁹ and “the righteousness of saints.” And the *golden girdle* of faithfulness¹ and truth not on the loins, as with men whose reins need chastening, as Aretas says, but on the breasts of zeal, and of the milk of lovingkindness to men, and two-fold love of His Church. Not with the many-coloured zone, as of the Levitical priesthood, but that of gold, as more precious and Divine : the golden law of charity, which is “the bond of perfectness.”² Thus fulfilling the

⁶ Dan. x. 16.⁷ 2 Cor. vi. 16.⁸ Matt. xviii. 20.⁹ Lev. xvi. 4.¹ ἀλήθεια, Isa. xi. 5 ; Eph. vi. 14.² Col. iii. 14.

prophetic description of Christ, "I will clothe Him with thy robe, and strengthen Him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into His hand."³ "His *hairs* were *white*;" as St. Paul says, "the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," but is "now revealed:"⁴ "*like wool*," from exceeding softness and beauty; and *white as snow*, as white not from age, but with that whiteness which is from Heaven. "Thou deckest Thyself with light as it were with a garment." "The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool."⁵ "The two breasts," says Bede, "are the two Testaments; and the golden girdle the choir of saints adhering in love to their Lord, embracing the Testaments, keeping, as the Apostle says, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "Beautiful," says the same writer, "is the form of the Church here described, as having on the breast the light of Divine love." As the Lord says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning." "The gold," says St. Gregory, "signifies charity;" and "to have the golden girdle on the breasts is to restrain, through the chains of love alone, all the motions of the changing thoughts."⁶

"*His eyes as a flame of fire*," as intimating His God-head; for "I am the light of the world," says Christ; "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins;"⁷ and as "in flaming fire taking vengeance."⁸ "As in Ezekiel," says St. Jerome, "all of God is with flames."⁹ And "*His feet like fine brass*," as of His Manhood, by which He hath come down to us, the true foundation; for "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus

³ Isa. xxii. 21. ⁴ Eph. iii. 9.

⁵ Dan. vii. 9.

⁶ In Job, cap. xli. lib. xxxiv.

⁷ Jer. xvii. 10.

⁸ 2 Thess. i. 8.

⁹ In Dan. ch. vii.

Christ.”¹ His kingdom established below among persecutions, and founded also on the Apostles and Prophets; tried “as by fire,” yet brightly burning. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings.”² “The feet on fire,” says Bede, “is the Church of the last time, as to be examined more severely, and tried by pressures. For the aurichalcum (or fine brass) is brass, by much fire and chemical process brought to the colour of gold.” “It is good for me, O Lord,” in the beautiful words of St. Bernard, “in the furnace to be with Thee, rather than to be without Thee, even in Heaven. For what have I in Heaven but Thee, and what on earth have I desired apart from Thee? The furnace proveth the gold, and just men the trial of adversity. There art Thou, O Lord, in the midst of them that are gathered together in Thy Name, as with those Children of old. Why do we fear? Why shrink from this furnace? The fire rageth; but the Lord is with us.”³

And “*His voice as the sound of many waters*,” the waters that go forth from Jerusalem; the living waters of the Spirit; or rather, perhaps, as of many people, the Church of the redeemed in earth and Heaven; as the Prophet Ezekiel says, “like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech as the noise of an host;”⁴ and explained in Daniel, where the like symbolic description occurs, “as the voice of a multitude.”⁵ And “*in His right hand seven stars*,” those His angels, from the abundant pouring into them of the light of Christ, ascending and descending on prayers and ministries. Stars, says Aretas, are the angels, the superintendents of the Churches, as supplied with light from

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11. ² Isa. lii. 7. ³ In Ps. xci. Sermon. xvii.

⁴ Ezek. i. 24, and xliii. 2.

⁵ Dan. x. 6.

the Sun of righteousness Himself. But afterwards, speaking of the Angel of the Church at Ephesus, the same writer says, that it is the Church itself which is addressed, and not the presiding Angel. And this appears afterwards where it is said, "Hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." And of Smyrna, too, he says, "not the Angel, but the collection of the faithful." Perhaps the Angel means more than the Bishop or Priest, as often used throughout the Revelation—the ruling influence or spirit (as in chap. iii. 2). It is said, "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand" (chap. ii. 1); but under the Seals the fall of a star is more than the fall of a Bishop, as when Arianism turns the waters to wormwood. Doubtless, in the proper sense it is the Bishops (such as they ought to be, not as they are, and often may have been), as stars, appearing small in their humility, yet greater than all the world; stars coming forth to view in the night of persecution and adversity; stars, as shining not with their own light, but that of their sun; stars never idle, yet ever at rest in their orbits; stars to the benighted wanderer over trackless deserts or seas. Such as they should be; "For the priest's lips," says the Prophet, "should keep knowledge; for he is the angel of the Lord."⁶ But to be such they must be in Christ's *right hand*, not fallen from thence. "On Christ's right hand," says Bede, "is the spiritual Church. At Thy right hand did stand the Queen in a vesture of gold. And to her standing on His right hand, he says, Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom."

And "*out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword*," as He afterwards says to the Church at Pergamos; "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."⁷ And

⁶ Mal. ii. 7.

⁷ Rev. ii. 16.

as He goes forth at last against Antichrist, "to smite the nations,"⁸ whom the Lord "shall consume with the spirit of His mouth."⁹ "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked."¹ Yet not always punitive, though corrective; as St. Paul says of the Word, that it is "sharper than a two-edged sword."² And "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."³ Thus Tertullian says of this passage, that it is "the Divine word, two-edged with the two Testaments, of the Law and the Gospel."⁴

And "*His countenance as the sun in his strength*," even as seen by St. John at the Transfiguration; as in the Incarnation making the sun His tabernacle, whereby He traverses the spiritual Heavens,⁵ with healing on His wings as the Sun of Righteousness, lighting every one that cometh into the world; and Himself the light of the city of God; "as setting forth," says Bede, "His elect as found in Him, and who shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."⁶ Thus all nature to Christians has become spiritual, as furnishing symbols of their Lord's Presence. "Solemque suum, sua sidera norunt."

"¹⁷And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last. ¹⁸And *I am* He that liveth; and I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And have the keys of death and of hell."

"*I fell at His feet as dead*," from the feeling of human infirmity at the revelation of God, whom none can see and live. As in Abraham, in Joshua, in Daniel, in St. Paul. The mortification of the natural man at the sense

⁸ Rev. xix. 15.

⁹ 2 Thess. ii. 8.

¹ Isa. xi. 4.

² Heb. iv. 12.

³ Eph. vi. 17.

⁴ Cont. Marcion. iii. 14.

⁵ Ps. xix. 4, 5.

⁶ Matt. xiii. 43.

of Christ crucified. "I die daily," says the Apostle. But raised by the right hand of Him Who is God and Man, the right hand that raised the daughter of Jairus, and Peter when sinking, and which holds the stars. "*The first and the last*," as from everlasting to everlasting; having neither beginning of life nor end of days. Or, as Aretas says, "the First by His Divine Nature, the Last in His presence below for us." "In these last days" hath God "spoken to us by His Son."⁷ "The First," says Bede, "for all things were made by Him; the Last, because all things are by Him restored." As manifested in this Book itself from the Creation to the Judgment. "*I am He that liveth*." "If for your sakes," says Aretas, "I became dead, yet again have revived and trampled on death, how can it be that through Me and My appearing thou shouldst die? For with Me are the issues of life and death." The strong resemblance which all this has to the description in the tenth chapter of Daniel brings out the great characteristic of this Divine Book, as setting forth the old and new dispensation by one and the same Spirit. "My comeliness was turned into corruption." "I was in a deep sleep on my face." "And behold, a hand touched me."

"¹⁹ Write therefore the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the Angels of the seven Churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."

"*Things which thou hast seen*" may signify the seven Epistles, inasmuch as the symbolic representation as here given has throughout a reference to those seven Churches. And the expression "what thou seest send to the Churches"

⁷ Heb. i. 2.

occurred in the 11th verse; and this same "which thou sawest" twice occurs here in the last verse. And if so, "*the things which are*" may refer to the state of the Church rising and being formed in the Seals before the destruction of Jerusalem. And "*the things which shall be hereafter*" as to its fuller development in the seven Trumpets and the Little Book. Or "things thou hast seen" may intimate all the visions;—things which are, and are yet to be, the subjects of them.

SECTION IV

TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

CHAP. II. "¹Unto the angel of the Church in Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ²I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³And hast patience, and hast borne, for My Name's sake, and hast not fainted."

There is nothing more remarkable in this wonderful book than the manner in which all the parts are inwreathed one with another, mutually explain, and throw light on each other. The centre of light on every occasion is our Lord Himself, and described in each by strongly marked distinctive characteristics, and such as serve to elucidate the circumstances of the accompanying prophecy. Thus this first vision is found to pervade the seven Churches which are addressed. Each Epistle is in fact but explanatory or expressive of some one or more parts of the symbolic characteristics. This circumstance seems connected with some mystery, whereby the conduct of each Church or individual brings out, with respect to itself, some one of

the Divine attributes. Thus, to the Church at Ephesus, the part taken from our Lord's appearance is the holding in His hand the seven stars, and walking amidst the golden candlesticks; and His warning to this Church is of removing the candlestick. But afterwards, in the Trumpets, we read of the sun stricken and stars fallen; and what is this but that He, Who is in this vision as the sun, hath been hidden, and the stars fallen from His hand? For the locusts, or Mahometans, have now succeeded to them all. The locusts which in Joel cause that the sun should be dark, and the stars withdraw their shining.¹

“*The angel of the Church*’ evidently here means,” says Aretas, “the Church itself.” Cornelius à Lapidè understands it of the Bishop. It seems better to consider it as spoken to both alike, and thus Dr. Hammond takes it. It seems the general opinion that this Bishop was no other than Timothy himself, to whom St. Paul writes, and that he was afterwards succeeded by Onesimus, both of whom St. Ignatius mentions in his Epistle to the Ephesians (A.D. 109).

“*Canst not bear them which are evil.*” It is remarkable that Ephesus was the place at which St. John himself, after his return from Patmos, rushed out of the bath in which Cerinthus the heretic was, according to the account which Irenæus gives from Polycarp, where he instances in Polycarp himself the same spirit.² “*Tried them, which say they are apostles,*” as fulfilling, says Aretas, the Divine precept, which bids us “try the spirits, whether they be of God.” Their *patience* is here twice spoken of and dwelt upon; and St. John had before spoken of himself as their companion “in the kingdom and patience.” “Where God is, there,” says Tertullian, in his memorable

¹ Joel ii. 10.

² Iren. adv. Hær. lib. iii.

Sermon, "is His foster-child, Patience."³ And the ground of our patience is, that He "who walketh in the midst" of us knoweth our works and our trials. But this "patience" has a marked distinction from worldly ease; for it is connected with not being able to bear them that are evil.

"⁴Nevertheless, I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love. ⁵Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. ⁶But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

"I know thee," says Aretas, "both in thy first love, and in thy failing now in those deeds of charity to those in want." Thy first love seems the love of God and of Christ. With earthly love the bloom departs; but it must not be so in heavenly. Here we find that the hate, though good and laudable, may remain, while the love, its counterpart, is waning. "The removing of the Church is," says Aretas, "the leaving it naked of Divine grace to the storms raised by evil spirits and pestilent men. Or," he says, "the removal of the candlestick is the priestly throne of Ephesus, by transferring the pre-eminence to Constantinople. The candlestick is gone, the star is fallen, the sun of this vision is stricken, the pestilent locusts still hide the Eye of Heaven. Yet so great was that love, that the most exalted of St. Paul's Epistles, the most spiritual and full of mystery, is to the Church at Ephesus."

But to love what Christ loves is to hate what He hates. It is impossible to ascertain what these Nicolaitanes were, and whether they derived their name from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons,⁴ as it is supposed. St. Augustin⁵ and Clement of Alexandria,⁶ allowing the fact, yet clear his

³ De Pat. xi. 15. ⁴ Acts vi. 5. ⁵ Hæres. 5. ⁶ Strom. lib. iii.

own character; whereas Epiphanius⁷ and St. Jerome⁸ do not so. It is sufficient to know that, as Eumenius says, they were "most impious in doctrine, and in their lives most impure." As heretical principles are wont to reappear under new phases and names, they seem much the same as the Gnostics afterwards, and the Rationalists now, accepting Christianity, but explaining away its doctrines, and thereby making it compatible with licentiousness. Now if such corruptions and dangers existed so soon in a Church watched over by St. John himself and the place of his abode; planted and cherished by St. Paul; superintended so long by Timothy; addressed by St. Ignatius; the witness of martyrdoms and miracles; what might be expected in the advance of time in other Catholic Churches?

"⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of my God."

"*The Spirit saith,*" as Christ, when opening His mouth in parables, was wont to add these words, now again, in the dispensation of the Spirit, He in like manner appeals to the hearing ear for the spiritual understanding of mystery. And here we may observe one point of especial notice in these Epistles to the Churches, that in each the individual Christian is also addressed. He that "walketh in the midst" tends not only on each candlestick, but on each of the seven lamps of which it is composed, or the whole body of the faithful in each Church, with a particular and individual care. Each is a light as partaking of Christ the true light. "Ye shine," says St. Paul, "as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life."⁹

⁷ Lib. i. Hær. 25.

⁸ Epist. ad Heliodor.

⁹ Phil. ii. 15.

And we shall have occasion to notice in each Epistle that something appropriate is said to the individual expressly, inviting his especial attention. Thus here in the glorious Church of Ephesus, in the waning of her first love, he is called to attend to the warning voice addressed to his Church, with this gracious encouragement—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat." What if thy Church fall; thou, if faithful, shalt be with Me, Who am the Tree of Life in the heavenly paradise. What is that Tree but the Cross of Christ, the wisdom,¹ the riches, and immortality which are in Christ crucified?

SECTION V

TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

CHAP. II. "⁸And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan."

To the angel of the Church of Smyrna, perhaps the faithful martyr, another part of our Lord's description is taken. It is, "*These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.*" It is nothing else but one part of our Lord's own attributes which is given him, with the promise necessarily annexed to it and flowing from it, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Here again is to be observed the harmony and keeping of the appropriate symbol. In the former Epistle it was, "He who holds the seven stars," and "the paradise of God;" but here it is, He who died and liveth, who has "the crown of life" for them that die, and saves from "the second death." And again, in the subsequent

¹ Prov. iii. 18.

application to the individual, the same singular appropriateness of adaptation comes out: to the Ephesian faltering from his first love is held out the Tree of Paradise; to one in Smyrna, who might be joined in death with his martyred Bishop, it is said, on the other hand, "He that overcometh shall be unharmed of the second death."

"*I know thy works.*" "Lest thou also," says Aretas, "shouldst say, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?'"¹ For thou art rich in things spiritual, having the treasure hid in the field of thy heart which is Christ, rich in having Him for thy Protector, who being rich, for our sakes became poor." Poverty—probably mentioned as from spoliation, as with them at Jerusalem, "taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring substance."² In this Epistle praise is bestowed for well-doing; and the reward given in consequence is suffering. "He is a chosen vessel unto Me—I will show him how great things he must suffer."³ I know thee, and I know thine enemy—the Jew outwardly, yet no true child of Abraham, nor an Israelite indeed.

"¹⁰ Fear not at all those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil will cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

He that was permitted to afflict Job shall prove you, that ye may come forth as gold from the furnace. Their enemy, the Jew, was spoken of as of the synagogue of Satan, and Satan brings on the persecution; for it was stirred up by the Jews. "'*Fear not,*' the tribulation is but for a short time," says Aretas, "and as it were but for

¹ Isa. lviii. 3.

² Heb. x. 34.

³ Acts ix. 15, 16.

ten days." For a brief period, it may be, known to God, as "ten" or "twenty days" is expressive of a short time.⁴ There seems every reason to believe that the persecution here alluded to was that the termination of which was crowned with the celebrated martyrdom of Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna; yet it was so long after (A.D. 167), that it might have been doubted whether he could have been the angel addressed at this time (A.D. 94). But Tertullian and St. Jerome state that he was consecrated Bishop by St. John himself, and St. Irenæus by Apostles;⁵ and he was about his hundredth year at his martyrdom. At all events the allusion in prophecy may have been to the great saint; for He Who speaks is "He that was, and is, and is to come," and speaketh of things which be not as though they were.

The number Ten is a mystical number in Scripture, the complete aggregate of individuals; itself like unity, brought back to unity, the foundation too of indefinite multiplication; here it seems to intimate a perfect period of time known to God; it may perhaps have reference to something further than the immediate occasion of the Smyrnan persecutions. It may thus have a latitude of interpretation in its mystical import. For some, as Cornelius à Lapide, take it for a long or perfect period. Days pass into years in Hebrew mystery, as Sabbatic days to Sabbatic years; and the number ten stands for a multitude, "ten times" of trial,⁶ ten talents, ten horns, for many. The name Smyrna signifies myrrh in the Greek, as Bede observes; and myrrh, implying mortification, may be connected with this its deeper application, in the purifying by suffering of the Church universal. "A bundle of myrrh

⁴ Num. xi. 19.

⁵ Adv. Hær. iii. 3.

⁶ Job xix. 3; Gen. xxxi. 7.

is my well-beloved unto me.”⁷ Ten days are the period of tribulation when Christ’s presence seems withdrawn; ten were the days when He had ascended before He sent the Holy Ghost, while they continued in prayer.

“¹¹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

“*The second death*,” not that which separates the soul from the body, but man from his God. The former part is addressed to the faithful Bishop and his Church; in this last part to each individual in that Church is the appeal made.

SECTION VI

TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

CHAP. II. “¹² And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges. ¹³ I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan’s throne is; and thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, in the days wherein Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

One alike and sevenfold is the expression repeated to each Church, “*I know thy works*,” as by Him that walketh in the midst of the seven and watcheth each. But a very different symbol is here taken from our Lord’s Presence. It is He who speaks, “*out of*” whose “*mouth*” goeth the “*sharp two-edged sword*.” And of this all partakes. In this case there is a very keen distinguishing and separating from the strong mixture of good and evil, as by the two-edged sword—“the dividing asunder—the discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”¹ This Pergamos is said by Andreas to have been “full of idols beyond the

⁷ Song Sol. i. 13.

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

rest of Asia," which would be one indication of Satan's throne. Andreas speaks of the account of the martyrdom of Antipas existing in his time, and his bold expostulations against his accusers. It is said that in the reign of Domitian he was cast into the brazen bull. Of their bold opposition to those without approval is here expressed. It is of "the tares among the wheat," as Aretas says, that the rebuke is given. As Israel boldly withstood Midian, but was corrupted by it through the wiles of Balaam. Pannonius observes, that in this "sword" of Christ there is a reference to the Angel with a drawn sword who opposed Balaam:² "whence," He adds, "thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam."³ Such manifold analogies lie in the depths of Scripture that this may be something more than an accidental similarity. For in that appearance of the Angel, it implied by the drawn sword that God was angry with the Prophet at what he was about to do, as discerning the thoughts of his heart.

"¹⁴ But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. ¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes in like manner. ¹⁶ Repent, therefore, or else I will come unto thee quickly; and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

The doctrine of Balaam seems here to be the same as that of the Nicolaitanes. The seducing teachers so fearfully described in St. Jude and St. Peter's second Epistle have been considered by the ancient Church to have been Nicolaitanes; and in both instances allusion is made to "the way of Balaam." Whatever the doctrine of Balaam might have been, it appears from Scripture to have con-

² Num. xxii. 31.

³ Cornel. à Lapide.

sisted in seduction to idolatry by means of impurity. It may be observed, that it is not those of the Church generally against whom Christ will fight with this sword, but "*them*," i.e. these offenders. What this coming quickly with the sword of His mouth may exactly signify it is not easy to ascertain; it may, perhaps, include ex-communication, and, in consequence, a separation from the heavenly Manna of which He afterwards speaks. And such cutting off from His Church visible will agree with the other mention of this, "the breath of His lips," or the rod, or sword of His mouth, by which He will destroy the wicked at His final coming.⁴ "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him . . . and shall cut him asunder."⁵

"¹⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Here again we have, as in all, the individual application at the close, with a very remarkable change from the preceding, and surely of great value to us. It is the Church of Pergamos which had held the faith and adhered to the martyr; but of which it is twice stated that her seat is ^{where} Satan dwelleth, that she had the sin of Balaam and the hateful doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. But he that had an ear to hear, even amidst such corruptions in his Church and in the very abode of Satan, had the inexpressible consolation that he might still maintain within himself the witness of the Spirit and the secret election of God. "*To him that overcometh*" such temptations is promised, not the manna that comes on all the

⁴ Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 50.

Church, but the hidden manna laid up in the sanctuary of God, in type of the mystery which it represents, which is with God, the bread of immortality—the wisdom hid from the wise and prudent—the treasures that are hid in Christ, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to understand; the life hidden with Christ in God.⁶ The sweetness of the hidden manna may be here opposed to the carnal temptations of Balaam; such as may by experience be known to us all in the sweet refreshings of self-denial on overcoming temptation. “They joined themselves unto Baal-peor,” it is said, “and ate the offerings of the dead;”⁷ in contrast to which is given to the faithful the living bread from heaven.

And “*to him will I give the white stone,*” whereon is written the name of Christ, the secret knowledge of God, “the stone with seven eyes,”⁸ the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. As the hidden and secret ones in Israel when Baal prevailed. The difficulty about “the white stone” is that it is not a scriptural symbol, of the use of which we can judge by analogy; but it is not unusual in the Classics, where the white stone intimates the festal day, or acquittal in judgment, or election to victory. It may, like “the crown of victory” afterwards, be from thence adopted for a sacred symbol. But, taken separately, the term “white” does indeed always partake of a divine and heavenly character, intimating the chosen of the Spirit, and belonging to the white-clad company of Pentecost or Whitsunday. Altogether scriptural too is “the stone,” the “living stone, chosen of God, and precious,”⁹ a tried stone,¹ “spiritual stones.”

⁶ Col. iii. 3.⁷ Ps. cvi. 28.⁸ Zech. iii. 9.⁹ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.¹ Isa. xxviii. 16.

SECTION VII

TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA

CHAP. II. "18 And unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass. 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy last works to be more than the first."

For some reason this fourth Epistle, the centre and the longest of the seven, seems to rise into unspeakable dignity and importance, from the fulness and appropriate power of the attribute revealed. It is the Incarnation. The eyes of His Godhead, "ten thousand times brighter than the sun;"¹ and His steps, as Man, like brass "purified seven times in the fire." Or it may be of His Church, established by fiery trials, which burns brighter for those trials, even unto the end, the latter better than the former. "I will search Jerusalem with candles."² Ecumenius says, "the eyes of fire, as enlightening the just and burning the sinner;" and of the feet, "the inseparable and unconfounded union of the Godhead and Manhood, kindled with the fire of the Divine Spirit, and intangible to human reasonings." Again; the power of the symbols runs through the whole, as is apparent in the state of that Church. Having the "*eyes*" as "*of fire*," He says, "*I know thy works*;" and "All the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins." And the exhortation to perseverance "unto the end" is expressed by the symbol of "*feet*" in the furnace, burning brighter to the close. Perhaps the Godhead of Christ is here brought forward as opposed to "the depths of Satan," the mystery of the coming Antichrist denying the Son.

¹ Ecclus. xxiii. 19.

² Zeph. i. 12.

Epiphanius³ mentions an opinion that this Church did not yet exist at Thyatira, and that therefore the Epistle must be by prophetic anticipation. But this seems improbable. And the more so if this is that Thyatira to which the memorable convert Lydia belonged.⁴

“²⁰ Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest the (*or thy*) woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. ²¹ And I gave her space to repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. ²³ And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

“*Thou sufferest:*” it is her sufferance, not her active participation, which is reproved. “Nothing but her silence is blamed,” says Berengaud. Epiphanius mentions this Jezebel to have been Priscilla Maximilla and Quintilla, the Montanists. It seems more probable that allusion is made not to any woman, but to a heresy; and some, as Andreas, Primasius, and Tichonius, think it was that of the Nicolaitanes. And it certainly has the same characteristics of impiety in doctrine combined with impurity of life. But if so, yet as spoken of under a new designation, we must conclude it to be the same under a new form; at all events some false doctrine, instilled by the seductions of some powerful woman or party in the state. That “*woman*” of *thine*, or *thy wife*, seems to intimate a Church, like the Harlot afterwards. Alcazar suggests that it was the Synagogue. This seems not improbable, as having now taken the place of that idolatrous persecutress

³ Hæres. 51. Alogorum.

⁴ Acts xvi. 14.

against the true Israel of God ; but differing from that heathen queen in being herself a prophetess. "By the '*bed*' is meant sickness," says Aretas ; but Bede, "that of eternal punishment, into which she is cast by the just judgment of God, for that bed of lust by which she hath destroyed." It is as in the fate of Babylon : "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave . . . the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."⁵ And her sons are given to death, as were Jezebel's priests of Baal. Berengaudus has well observed the difference, that she is "*cast into the bed*" of hell, and her "*children slain with death* ;" but those of the faithful who have been seduced by her are to be chastened with "*tribulation*." "The Lord hath chastened and corrected me ; but He hath not given me over unto death."⁶ But even here it is added, "*if they repent not* ;" as having waited long, and still waiting for their repentance.

"²⁴ But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I put upon you no other burden. ²⁵ But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. ²⁶ And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter are broken to shivers : even as I received of My Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

"*The depths of Satan*" is taken by Andreas for his deep wiles. And Tertullian quotes it as such.⁷ Others consider it as the pretended wisdom of some heretical philosophy. As if what she called "the deep things of God" (or Gnosticism) were in fact but the deep things of Satan. By others, as Alcazar, it is supposed to be the

⁵ Isa. xiv. 11.⁶ Ps. cxviii. 18.⁷ De Idol. vii. 3.

Law of Moses combined with the Gospel, while they were not aware of the subtle depth of evil the principle contained, as Satan thereby assumed the appearance of an Angel of light. And that to this allude our Lord's words, "*I will put on you no other burden,*" of which like mention is made at the first great Council; "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost to lay upon you no greater burden."⁸ Berengaudus makes a distinction between "those who hold this doctrine" and "those who know the depths of Satan," understanding the latter of false Judaizing Apostles. The expression of adding no other burden might signify, I will call you to nothing beyond this perseverance. "Requiring of them," says Aretas, "nothing more, but that they keep the holy deposit of the faith entrusted to them undefiled till His coming. By His coming meaning either the final Judgment or the departure of each out of this life." The expression of promise here to "*him that overcometh*" is remarkable; for his "*ruling the nations*" is spoken of after gaining, it would appear, the crown of martyrdom, or having persevered "*to the end:*" the same expression is afterwards used of "the man child," or the primitive martyrs, after he has been caught up to the throne of God (chap. xii. 5). And it is part of the song of the redeemed in Heaven, "we shall reign on the earth" (chap. v. 10). And here it must be observed, that it is applying to them the words spoken of our Lord Himself in the second Psalm, and to which allusion is here apparently made, "*even as I received from My Father.*" For in that Psalm this power is given unto Christ on His Incarnation and humiliation, which He here communicates to His martyrs: as afterwards, "To him will I grant to sit with Me on My throne." And

⁸ Acts xv. 28.

probably a reference to this is intended in the symbol of this Epistle, "the feet of brass burning with fire." He rules over the nations by the power of His Cross; and here it seems to be indicated that by the Cross His martyr shall do the same. It seems part of the promise: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God" (chap. iii. 12). It is seen in this that martyrdom is the strength of the Church; the blood of martyrs, said to be the seed of the Church; the kindling of a light that none shall put out. There are two other ways, in either of which it might be understood: either as a promise, not to the martyr himself, but to the Church, that by persevering obedience it shall obtain power; as in Daniel, of "the kingdom being given unto the Saints:"⁹ or it may allude to those mysterious promises of power and authority being given in the regeneration, "that Saints shall judge the world."¹ Thus Ecumenius says: "He said in the Gospel, To him that doeth the works I will give authority over five or ten cities. Or He may thus allude to the judgment of the unfaithful, by which they who had been seduced shall be ruled or broken as by a rod, being judged of by those who have believed in Christ."

It is added, "*And I will give him the morning star,*" the fairest of stars in the heart, preceding the day-spring, the heavenly forerunner of the Sun of Righteousness. And after death as ruling the nations and turning many to righteousness, he shall shine as a star for ever and ever.² Here, as in other instances, the gift is no less than Christ Himself. For He is "the Tree of life," "the hidden Manna," "the white Stone;" and of Himself He says, "I am the bright and morning Star" (chap. xxii. 16).

⁹ Dan. vii. 17.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 2.

² Dan. xii. 3.

SECTION VIII

TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS

CHAP. III. “¹And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. ²Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect (*or* fulfilled) before My God. ³Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee.”

Here, again, all is throughout in the same keeping with the symbols of the Divine Presence; to the Church which still exists in *name*, but in spirit is *dead*, He who speaks is “*He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars*,” as about to withdraw that Spirit, and let fall that star from His hand. But still, as such, He has the few or faithful remnant there in His keeping, and assurance is given them that their Baptismal robe shall yet be theirs, and their name not blotted out of the Book of life together with their Church; that God will not be ashamed of them who in such a Church are not ashamed of Him. The seven Spirits Berengaudus speaks of as the sevenfold gifts.¹ Aretas, as “the operations of the life-giving Spirit, which, as well as the stars, are in the hand or power of Christ. For He dispenses the Spirit as of one substance, as He said: ‘The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father.’”² Perhaps the stars may be the outward sacramental forms of life; the spirits the inner life of the Church. It was the once affluent Sardis, and thence perhaps the seeming life in death. “She that liveth in

¹ Isa. xi. 2, 3.² John xv. 26.

pleasure is dead while she liveth.”³ “The life of the body is the soul,” says Augustin; “and as the body without the soul is dead, so is the soul dead without God.”⁴ There is in this case no Balaam, no Jezebel, no synagogue of Satan, no Nicolaitan, but Satan is content to leave undisturbed a Church which in seeming life is dead. This is the case with two Churches only out of the seven. Sardis, which is dead, and the lukewarm Laodicea; the two most of all condemned.

“*Be watchful,*” or rather “*become*” so: wake up from thy sleep to watchfulness; and “*strengthen*” from the languor of sleep “*the things which remain:*” thrilling words to us as used by Bp. Andrews, in his Prayers, of our own Church. Even “*thy works*” themselves are dead, unless quickened by charity within them. “*Remember how thou hast received*”—“that tradition,” says Aretas, “which thou hast received from the Apostles:” “the faith of thy Baptism,” says Berengaudus, “and promises then made of renouncing the devil and his works.” It must be observed, that the word translated “hold fast” is rather “keep” or “preserve.” “*I will come as a thief*” in the midst of thy slumbers: it is precisely the same case as in the Gospel, “The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.”⁵ “On those that are prepared,” says Aretas, “it is rest from their labours; on the unprepared, as a thief bringing the soul’s death.” “The uncertainty of death is but the emblem of the Lord’s second coming.” In unison with this, it may be observed to be the general law of God’s dealing: “He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”⁶

³ 1 Tim. v. 6. ⁴ In Ps. lxx. 17. ⁵ Matt. xxiv. 50. ⁶ Prov. xxix. 1.

“⁴ But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”

“*A few names*”—for, as Bede beautifully says, “He knoweth His own sheep by name; as He knew Moses by name, and writeth the names of His own in heaven.” “A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord. . . And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.”⁷ “By the *garments not defiled*,” says Aretas, “He speaks of the bodies of the Saints, as Jacob prophesied of the offspring of Judah,” *i.e.* of Christ, that He should “wash His garments in wine,”⁸ or the blood of His Passion. Thus Isaiah, as in dramatic language, says to Him: “Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat?” Berengaudus explains it of the purity they have been partakers of in Baptism. But Œcumenius, “they that have not polluted the garments of the flesh with filthy deeds, in the regeneration shall shine forth with Me.” “They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of My Father.” Even thus was Christ Himself in white garments on Mount Tabor, with Moses and Elias partaking of that His glory; and, as the company afterwards in this book, with Him in white. Among these names, we may suppose, was to be that of the saintly Melito, who seventy-five years afterwards (A.D. 172) was their Bishop: and said to have been a Commentator on this Book, himself accounted almost a Prophet.

“⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His

⁷ Mal. iii. 16.

⁸ Gen. xlix. 11.

angels. ⁶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

"*He shall be clothed in white,*" as at the regeneration of Baptism, so in the second regeneration of the last Day; he shall "be clothed upon," if so be that he "shall not be found naked." And "*I will not blot out his name,*" for it has been already written there. "Rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven."⁹ Already made "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."¹ "My fellow-labourers," says St. Paul, "whose names are in the book of life."²

SECTION IX

TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA

CHAP. III. "⁷And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth: ⁸I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name."

This appeal to the faithful Church in Philadelphia is throughout exquisitely beautiful in the keeping of the figures and analogies, if one might say so on a subject so awful: of the door—and the temple—and the pillar—and the key of David—the false throughout and the true. While the symbol from Christ's attributes which is brought to bear upon it appears with an expressive and appropriate change in the language; for in the description before, to which it refers in the symbolic vision, Christ bears "the keys of hell and of death;" but here as having

⁹ Luke x. 20.

¹ Eph. ii. 19.

² Phil. iv. 1.

"*the key of David*," in allusion perhaps to the trial of that Church from Judaism; and as intimating that to Him, as the true Son of David, is this kingdom given,¹ and the Priesthood of Melchizedek; that those, the keys of death and of hell, are no other than the key of David, of which the prophet had spoken in his description of what forms the outline of this vision: "I will clothe Him with Thy robe, and strengthen Him with Thy girdle. . . . And the key of the House of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open."² It is this figure which is carried on throughout—of the pillar, and the temple, and the New Jerusalem. All things are become new; the Israel of old is lost in the true Israel of God. In the Gospel of St. John it is, "I am the door;" and the Porter that openeth seems to be the Holy Spirit; but here, as of One substance, He Himself bears the key—the key of the Temple of David and Solomon; the one true fold, the household of God, as Himself God and Man. Whence, on St. Peter's confessing the Son of God, it is said, "I will give unto thee the keys."

"He is *Holy* and *True*," says Œcumenius, "as Holiness itself; and self-existing Truth." "He is truly holy," says Aretas, "Who is thrice so declared in the Seraphic Hymn in Isaiah, the Son of God." And by the key of David being put as the same as the keys of hell and death, "it shows," says Aretas, "that, as God and Christ, He has authority over life and death. For the key implies authority over the house. As Gabriel said to the Virgin, that the throne of David was given by the Father to the Son. To open, is to justify; and to shut, is to condemn. For by His divine and eternal power He both justifies

¹ Ps. cx.

² Isa. xxii. 22.

and condemns. 'It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?'"

Thou art weak, yet lean thou on My truth. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is perfected in weakness." "Trials shall not close the door," says *Cecumenius*; "I ask not of thee more than thy power." "A city small in importance, yet great," he adds, "in faith." Though the kingdom of Heaven in the Gospels is to be seized by violence, yet where there is the will without the power, He opens the door. *Aretas* says, "As thou hast held out even beyond thy strength, not having denied My name; wherefore I will not measure the return according to thy little power, but with the greatness of the gift will meet thee as I am wont to do in return." "The open door is that of Divine wisdom," says *Bede*; rather perhaps all the treasures of the kingdom and forgiveness of sins. *Berengaudus* says, "As opening the mysteries of the Old Testament;" perhaps in allusion to the Jews, and that the Bishop of Philadelphia, as of little learning, was unequal to this. But it sounds of something far greater than this explanation.

"⁹ Behold, I give thee them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. ¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

As weak, yet faithful in that thy weakness, I have opened for thee the door. Though thou art weak, I will make thee a pillar of strength. I bid thee not to expel these false Jews as I do others; but I will subdue them

under thy feet: expressions which the prophet used of the Gentiles bowing down to Israel, "they shall bow down to thee with their face to the earth,"³ and "they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet,"⁴ here said of the Jews to the true Israel. "Thou shalt have for thy reward," says Œcumenius, "in the confession of My name, the conversion and repentance of the Jews, who shall fall at thy feet, asking guidance and enlightenment of Me, being from henceforth Jews, both in the secret of the heart and openly." "*The synagogue of Satan*," as being the father of lies from the beginning, on account of some great beguiling subtlety, whereby Satan blends the spirit of false Judaism with the Church of Christ.⁵

"*I will keep thee*," "not from being tried," says Bede, "but from being overcome by the trial." The tribulation here spoken of is said, by Cornelius à Lapide, to be the persecution of Trajan. Œcumenius says either that under the Roman emperors; or that under Antichrist at the end of the world. So also Aretas, that both are signified, and the deliverance promised that it should not be above their strength. And he thinks the expression, "*I come quickly*," has its fuller import with regard to Antichrist, or the latter persecution. Wherefore he was to hold fast the treasure of the faith, that the crown be not lost in that trial. For "the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish."⁶ Bede also that it speaks of the trials of the Jews in the time of Antichrist; and that this last persecution is here designated under this sixth Epistle: as the number six is that under which Antichrist is afterwards described. This, indeed, is the only one of the seven

³ Isa. xlix. 23.

⁴ Isa. lx.

⁵ See John viii. 44.

⁶ Ps. ix. 18.

Epistles in which there appears something of a general consent that Antichrist is spoken of: and the address falling under the mystical Six, is thus remarkable, as casting its shadow beforehand on the period of Antichrist; and whatever it may literally intimate of Philadelphia itself, where a Church still continues, it seems to indicate that the Church which will hold out through the trials of Antichrist, will be one of an humble, unpretending character. Further, the Jews appearing in this one instance to submit to the Cross, may favour their opinion who think that they are finally to be restored; and perhaps, as some suppose, under the sixth vial. At all events, it is much to be observed that there, under the sixth vial, in the gathering of the forces of Antichrist, this same expression is again inserted, "Behold, I come quickly."⁷ To this Church of Philadelphia, in weakness and poverty, as to Smyrna in persecution, there is no reproof. "I have somewhat against thee," is not said as to others.

"That no man take thy crown." What one hath lost another receives, as the pound of the unprofitable servant in the Parable. "And thus," says Bede, "the fixed number of the saints is preserved of God." St. Augustin also thus applies it.⁸ Thus as in type did Jacob succeed to the birthright of Esau; St. Matthias the Apostleship of Judas; Christians to the privileges of the Jews.

"¹² Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God, and out of it he shall never depart any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. ¹³ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

⁷ Rev. xvi. 12, 15.

⁸ Vol. xi. p. 1311.

He shall persevere unto the end; he shall be as the pillars mysteriously mentioned in Solomon's Temple as having a name; he shall be in the Church as the Jachin and Boaz, firmly "*established*" in "*strength*."⁹ Or pillars in pre-eminence of power, as St. Paul of James, Peter, and John, that they "*seemed to be pillars*."¹ He shall know God, and that not as the Israelite of old, but as revealed in the Spirit; and the kingdom of heaven within, that cometh down from above: and the "*new Name*" of Christ—"not," says Bede, "that of the Son of God, which he had before the foundation of the world; but as the Son of Man, dead and risen, and at the right hand of God." Shall know Him Whom to see with the inner mind is to love; and Whom to love is "*the new Jerusalem*," "*the vision of peace*."

SECTION X

TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA

CHAP. III. "¹⁴And unto the angel of the Church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; ¹⁵I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched *one*, and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

The "*Amen*," the truth and fidelity of God, in contrast to the shadowy and unreal nature of the Laodicean religion. That Great Name is brought to bear upon them at which shadows flee away; it is the Amen. It is He that exhorts them to cast off all vain counterfeits: "*I counsel thee to buy of Me*." For His promises are grounded

⁹ 1 Kings vii. 21.

¹ Gal. ii. 6.

on the Rock, as having already borne witness unto death. "Being," says Bede, "the very truth in essence of Divinity, He shows Himself made through the mystery of the Incarnation, the beginning of the creation, to conform the Church to the endurance of sufferings." Humiliation is as needful in Churches as in single persons.

"*I would thou wert cold or hot.*" Thou art satisfied with thyself, and this arises from thy lukewarmness. "He that is cold," says Ecumenius, "and has never tasted a living faith, it may often be hoped will obtain it; but he that having been quickened by the Spirit through Baptism grows remiss, cuts off his hopes of salvation:" "quenching," says Aretas, "the graces that quicken the soul, and becoming indolent in the care of things present." And Bede, in like manner, "If thou wert an unbeliever, there would be hope of thy conversion; but since thou knowest thy Lord's will and doest it not, I will cast thee forth from the bowls of My Church." Thou "*knowest not that thou art blind*;" for "if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."¹

"¹⁸I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me."

The imagery of the Apocalypse is here wonderfully sustained in every verse and every expression; the strength, the variety, the rapid transition in the figurative language, is quite peculiar; and every image contains a parable. If

¹ John ix. 41.

thou wouldst be rich, obtain the true gold for the false that perishes: if thou wouldst be brightly apparelled, obtain the white garment of immortality; lest thou be "found naked"² in that debasement of thy fallen nature which the appliances of wealth in vain would hide. If thou wouldst have thine eyes opened, come to Him that "anointed" the eyes of the born blind. "The eye-salve," says Ecumenius, "is to have no possessions; for if 'a gift doth blind the eyes,'³ to receive no gifts shall open them." "*As many as I love I chasten*;" "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;" and "the branch that beareth fruit He purgeth, that it may bring forth more."⁴ "Shrink not," says Bede, "from the endurance of adversities; for such is the special proof of being loved of the Lord."

But, with Divine tenderness, and all the gentleness of the Canticles, it is added, "*I stand at the door, and knock*." "My heart awaketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."⁵ To the lukewarm Christ enters not: He knocks; but there must be within one to hear His voice and to open the door; something to be done on our part: if we constrain Him not to abide, He will depart. He had said to us before, "Knock, and it shall be opened;" and now it is even more—He Himself knocks at the door, asking for admission. "He cometh and knocketh;" and blessed they who, "when He cometh and knocketh, open unto Him immediately."⁶ But when He shall have entered in—when He shall have risen up and shut to the door—then to knock at the door without will be in vain. "Without constraint is My presence," says Ecumenius; "at the door of the heart I knock, and rejoice together with them that open for their own salvation. For I

² 2 Cor. v. 3. ³ Deut. xvi. 12. ⁴ John xv. 2.

⁵ Cant. v. 2.

⁶ Luke xii. 36.

account this a supper; nourished with what nourisheth them." "He sups with us," says Berengaudus, "when in our progress He rejoices; we sup with Him when we rejoice in the hope of glory." But all this falls short of the beautiful expression itself.

"²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. ²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

The termination of the Epistles is the crown of all, to reign with Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."⁷ "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, ye also shall sit on thrones."⁸ "For since for our sakes He became man," says Ecumenius, "being God and the everlasting King, and partaking of all things that belong unto us except sin, He hath imparted all things that are His to those that overcome the devil, so far as it is possible for man to receive them."

It must have been noticed that each of the Seven Epistles terminates with two appeals to individuals: "*He that overcometh*," . . . and "*He that hath an ear*," . . . It may also be observed that the order in which these two occur differs in the three former Epistles from that of the four last. In the three first of these seven it is, "*He that hath an ear*," and then "*He that overcometh*." In the four last the order is reversed. In the Apocalypse there is nothing without a mystery and a principle. Though we cannot explain this change, yet we may notice that the sacred Seven is made up of two numbers; the one of which speaks of what is Divine, the other Human. So it is if we make it to consist of three and

⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁸ Matt. xix. 28.

four, or of one and six. For the one and the three are both equally of God, and the four and the six are both alike of the world; of the fulness of the four quarters, or the perfection of the six days. The three and four and the one and six in combination speak of God reconciled with the world. There may be a reason, therefore, why in the Seven of the Apocalypse there is a distinction between the three and the four, developing itself occasionally in various combinations. For, as a matter of fact, in the Seven Seals, and the Seven Trumpets, and in the Seven Vials, a marked distinction will be found between four and three; of which there is this slight intimation in the Seven Epistles.

SECTION XI

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING

There is no reason why we should wander out of and beyond the pale of Holy Scripture—to history, or system, or human authority—in order to derive the hidden manna of these prophecies, and the morning-star to keep watch in the heart for the great dawn. Let us fix our eyes on the Divine countenance as therein revealed; let us watch for the dawning light thereon; let us weigh, and weigh again, and compare the words that come from His lips, and try them in the burning furnace of this world's sad experience. First of all, the variety of circumstance and of trial, in the case of these Churches, is so great that it seems to comprehend the state of every Church that can arise: the sevenfold Spirit of good; the seven spirits of evil; so that every Church that would understand itself will find itself in that mirror; and every faithful one in every Church will be able to see that Eye

that trieth the heart—the Seven Eyes in that Stone—in his own bosom, and on his own life, with regard to his position in “the household of God.” For this reason is it emphatically repeated at the end of each, “*Hear what the Spirit saith*”—not, let it be observed, what Christ says in this vision, but that same voice of His Spirit in all time; that still small voice such as will ever be heard from the Spirit in the Churches unto the end. And attention has been called to the fact, that in every case an individual is addressed, as well as his Church, for good or evil. For otherwise, in reading these warnings to the Seven Churches, wherein such solemn appeals are made to the attention of the reader, any individual in those Churches might inquire what they are to him, inasmuch as he cannot influence or change the state of his Church or Diocese. Again; the fact that the Church and its Angel, or Bishop, are so blended as to have rendered it matter of question which is addressed, is in itself instructive, as proving that as the Bishop, so is the Church in the long run; as the Church, so the Bishop.¹ If the Church should amend, God will give a suitable Bishop; an evil Bishop is because the Church has become worthy of such. The labourer sent depends on the prayers² of the people, and on the people that pray. Again, the appeal is in the plural: “What the Spirit *saith to the Churches*.” The voice is found in all these alike, and as such it is the one voice that appeals to each Christian in the Church Catholic.

But these seven Epistles are to the Churches of all time what the parables of the Gospel are to individuals—a glass in which they may detect themselves, and the judgment of God. It is, in fact, beholding themselves in “the mind

¹ See Eccclus. x. 2, 4.

² Matt. ix. 38.

of Christ." Hence this, their searching depth of application to all times, has led to those fanciful interpretations which suppose them successive historic periods until the end, as Henry More and others have done. They are, indeed, prophetic, inasmuch as they supply us with the principles of God's dealing with Churches; which, if properly applied, become in a certain sense predictive of consequences. An Ephesus may be found in the waning of first love; Smyrna in persecution; Pergamos in corruption; Thyatira in perseverance; Sardis in defection; Philadelphia in meekness; Laodicea in lukewarmness. But although each of these Churches is beset by its own severe trial or corroding corruption, yet such does not appear as in the Gospels or Apostolic Letters, as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," or such general principle; but some more tangible shape of living evil embodied, or the rising again of something before seen in the pages of Holy Writ; assuming a distinct form, inasmuch as existing polities are described.

The Church at Ephesus has to contend with the Nicolaitan, hated of God. The Church of Sardis is beset with the blasphemy of Satan's synagogue. That of Pergamos dwells where Satan's throne is; and has the plague-spot of Balaam's doctrine of old, and the new disease of the Nicolaitan. Thyatira has Jezebel among her teachers, and is thereby conversant with the depths of Satan. The Church at Philadelphia has to struggle against the proud domination of Satan's synagogue, which would exclude her from the love of Christ. Sardis, if it has no soul-disease, yet worse, is spiritually dead; and few in her have their names in the book of life. If Laodicea has no false religion to struggle with, it is because, rich and proud in this world, it is indifferent to the true riches, and is content

to sleep. These are, for the most part, not of the world only and its general influence ; but where there is any life in the Church, there is also an active enemy, in some parasitic form, a living personification and incarnation of evil. The Nicolaitanes' odious practice and doctrine at Ephesus and Pergamos seems to have consisted in a sect or mode of teaching, which, confessing Christ, yet by a subtle rationalism virtually explained away the Incarnation ; and thus, doing away with the restraints of Christ crucified and the reality of revelation, gave licence to impurity of life. But nothing being expressly told us of their tenets, all that we can gather from these places is, that one essential mark of our love to Christ will be a hatred to false doctrine ; such as St. John, the disciple of true love, often intimates. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil," is our Blessed Saviour's approved test of love. "Bid him not God speed," is St. John's own declaration, "that ye be not partaker of his evil deeds." This hate is as essential to true love as shade to light, ever deepening with the intensity of it.

These are the only intimations of false doctrine entirely new in character. There are two forms of evil, long buried and dead, that lift up their heads in the Christian Churches, and haunt them with ghastly besetting presence—the doctrine of Balaam and of the idolatrous Jezebel. And it is remarkable, that the same things are attributed to both of these, fornication and idolatry ; whether it be spoken literally or in the deeper sense of spiritual adultery. The subject is mysterious, and not the less so from the fact of that mention of Balaam occurring in two other places in the New Testament, standing forth from the Old with a significant prominence ; for St. Peter and St. Jude both bring out and strongly mark this "following the error

of Balaam." Yet with regard to what the doctrine of Balaam was, we are left uncertain. What we learn of him from the Old Testament is, that he was a Prophet of God, who spoke the words of God; yet at the same time was in heart given to covetousness, for which he would make merchandise of God's children, and, in subtle hypocrisy, encouraged an idolatrous king to destroy them by wiles, corrupting them in order to gain his own ends. It may be some strange union of enthusiasm and hypocrisy with great wickedness at heart. Jezebel is different, as an abandoned idolatrous queen, and would seem to indicate some influence in worldly station, as that of Balaam in the priestly; but she has here the new character of a prophetess, by means of which she corrupts. These two are developments of evil ever arising in the same old, and yet in somewhat of a new shape. But the introduction of the two in Christian Churches opens to us a subject of deep reflection: they are and have been, yet, as the ten-horned Beast, though they have ceased to be, they still exist.³ They are the same Balaam and Jezebel, lifting up their old shapes where the Church of God is—limbs and parts, ever and anon appearing, of one great secret body of evil.

The doctrine of Balaam seems in one place⁴ the same as that of the Nicolaitanes; and it is supposed that both of them are intended in the fearful description of St. Jude, and spoken of as "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ;"⁵ and therefore as coming under the denomination of Antichrists. Farther, it may be observed, that we have here, first, Balaam the false prophet; then we have Jezebel the adulteress. Whether both are one and the same, and imply the Nicolaitanes, is uncertain. There is something similar to this in what we have in the Church

³ Rev. xvii. 8.⁴ Rev. ii. 14, 15.⁵ Jude 4.

afterwards—the two-horned lamb-like Beast or false Prophet, and afterwards Babylon the Harlot; the former ministering to the ten-horned Antichrist, the latter riding on him; but whether the false Prophet and the woman be one and the same, is in the same manner doubtful. Perhaps in both cases different phases of the same principle.

And now we come to another subject, on which it may throw light. Together with the mystic or spiritual Balaam and Jezebel, there is the real Synagogue of the Jews, the greatest enemy and persecutor in those days of Christ's Church, to which all the New Testament bears witness. But they are spoken of as not truly Jews, but only so in name (chap. iii. 9), as St. Paul says, not of the circumcision, for that were the true Church; but the "concision,"⁶ the false Church of Israel. But the question here arises—for these, so awfully and prominently put forward, are not of private interpretation, but for our learning—if Balaam and Jezebel are still alive, leading astray and corrupting, may it not be intended, that when that old Jerusalem had ceased to occupy her place as in the early Churches, yet that the name and the principle may be prolonged in the same mysterious sense as Balaam and Jezebel? Does not Scripture point out to us this mode of interpretation, and designedly wish us to ponder it, and by the mention of Balaam and Jezebel suggest it to us? This is matter for consideration, and may tend to the further explanation of this Book. There is something mysterious in the dark shade that is over the Jew—"the Synagogue of Satan," in the Prophets, Gospels, and Epistles; and still more marked in this prophecy—dark, yet significant, the first-born of Satan. The heavy curses on Egypt and Amalek are found to be afterwards fulfilled in the very Jew through

⁶ Phil. iii. 3.

whom they were spoken. It may be asked, whether or not the same abides on the synagogue till the end, or is but further transferable to the same in a new form?

We may now inquire, whether there are any indications in these Seven Churches as yet of Antichrist; for in St. John's time there were "many Antichrists;" so that, although not mentioned in these, yet can we gather any, however indistinct, intimations of it? One would naturally look for it in the remarkable mention of Satan, which so often occurs in these warnings, as if to draw our attention to him "whose coming is after the working of Satan." At the Churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, both highly approved of by the faithful Witness, the expression occurs of "the Synagogue of Satan" as besetting them. There are in both *false* Jews, a *false* Synagogue. On the other hand, Pergamos, where the doctrine of Balaam had sway, is "the throne of Satan;" and again, "the place where Satan dwells." And the doctrine of Jezebel at Thyatira is, to know the very "depths of Satan." Now, as one thing to be observed in all the warnings is, that it is not direct heathenism or infidelity, but some false corrupting form of religion which is spoken of; so, in the mention of Satan, the only point of resemblance is the same. It is a *false* Synagogue pretending to be the true. "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers."⁷ Balaam was a prophet of God; Jezebel, though a heathen idolatress, was enthroned in Israel, and is here a prophetess and a teacher. Nor does she seem one altogether without the Church; for Christ hath "given her space to repent, but she repented not." Balaam is with Balak as the false prophet afterwards with the Beast; and teaches to cast a stumbling-

⁷ Acts xxiv. 14.

block in the way of God's children. One is naturally inclined to connect the different parts of this Divine Book with each other, and to suppose that, like different wards of the same key, they may tend together to unlock the great mystery. Thus, St. Gregory speaks of many being secretly parts of Antichrist, who have little thought of so being. As Cain was a limb of Antichrist, though he saw not his time; and Judas, and Simon. "Thus a wicked body," he says, "is united to its head, and limbs to limbs, when they know not each other. For neither," he adds, "had Pergamos known the books or the words of Balaam. And both times and places separated the Church of Thyatira from the knowledge of Jezebel; but Jezebel is said to dwell therein. Thus," he says, "though the author of iniquity has not yet come, he is already visible in those who do his works." Hence John says, "Even now are there many Antichrists."⁸ Hence Paul, "That he might be revealed in his time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work."⁹ As if saying, Then Antichrist will be manifestly seen; for he now secretly works his hidden works.¹

It is supposed by some, that the glorious visions of the Prophets are to be fulfilled in the local Jerusalem; by others, that Antichrist shall be in her, as called also Sodom and Egypt.² The course of fulfilled prophecy will be, in great measure, the unravelling of this mystery; for early writers, as St. Irenæus, say, that Antichrist will reign in Jerusalem; and they also say, incidentally, that his capital is Babylon; because in these things they are but echoes of the Apocalypse. The event will explain how far there may be a Jerusalem which will be one with Babylon, and

⁸ 1 John ii. 18.

⁹ 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

¹ In Job xxxviii. lib. xxix. 15.

² Rev. xi. 8.

what connexion Antichrist may have with them. Doubtless the fulfilment will be in a sense vast and spiritual. The holier Jerusalem of the Law and the Prophets, the City from above, "the Mother of us all," is so wonderfully sustained in figure throughout the Apocalypse, that the same may be the case with its sad counterpart.

PART II

The Sealed Book ; or, Prophetic History of the Church

SECTION I

THE THRONE SEEN IN HEAVEN

CHAP. IV. “¹After this I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

THE “*door opened in heaven*”—the opening of the mystery of the kingdom, “the secret mysteries,” says Œcumenius, “of the Spirit.” Thus Ezekiel, “The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.”¹ And as Jacob, when he said, “This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”² It is as before, “*like as it were a trumpet*” in solemn heralding of the New Covenant with hallowed unearthly sound, but in the living voice. “*Come up hither*”—“the perfect withdrawing,” says Œcumenius, “from things earthly;” “and raising the mind,” Berengaudus adds, “to things heavenly.”

“²And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting. ³And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald.”

¹ Ezek. i. 1.

² Gen. xxviii. 17.

It is "the kingdom of Heaven," and therefore the throne is there of the heavenly King; there is "*One sitting*" as established in power; it is the indescribable and unspeakable Majesty of Godhead. And now it is not as in the prophet Ezekiel, "as the appearance of the likeness of a throne" (chap. x. 1), but the kingdom has come; "*behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and one sitting on the throne.*" Nor is it, as in Ezekiel, like "the sapphire stone," as of the natural blue heavens above our head, for it is in heaven itself, and "*He that sat thereon to look upon like a translucent jasper and sardine stone.*" And "*round about the throne*" the great emblem of God's covenanted mercy to mankind, "*a rainbow;*" not as on earth, but in Divine substance denoting unchangeableness, "*like unto an emerald:*" as a sea was there, but of glass; so a rainbow, but of emerald.

It is again as in the former vision, the temple of Solomon; the Mercy-seat is there, and the Cherubims, and the mystical Sea, and the Twenty-four Elders of the Jewish Priesthood; but as the golden Candlesticks before blending with the seven Stars, they are now tokens of the true, changed into the spiritual kingdom. For "ye are come unto Mount Sion, to an innumerable company of angels, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus."³ And what if the Divine appearance Itself be but the Urim and Thummim on the sacerdotal breast, the mystery of Godhead enshrined in the Church? For the jasper is the last, and the sardine is the first of the Twelve stones,⁴ and by taking the first and the last it seems to indicate all the Twelve. The everlasting Light of God now by the Incarnation seen on the throne of His kingdom. But again;

³ Heb. xii. 22-24.

⁴ Ex. xxviii. 17-20.

as the vision of the Cherubic Throne in Ezekiel is at Chebar (chap. i. 3), and the same also again in the temple (chap. x. 15), as not of Israel, and yet of Israel, being prophetic of the spiritual kingdom; so here is it of the temple, and yet not of the temple, but gone forth from it; "the Lord sitting upon a throne," in the temple, as in Isaiah's vision of Heaven; that throne removing thence in Ezekiel.⁵

"*He that sat on the throne*" is said by Aretas and others to be God the Father; for the Lamb from His hand takes the Book (chap. v. 6, 7). And it may be added that a distinction is made, "Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb" (chap. vii. 10). Berengaudus, "That here it is Christ on His throne; but afterwards, when the Lamb appears and takes the Book from Him that sat on the throne, it is the Father: inasmuch as He says, 'I am in the Father and the Father in Me;' and, 'he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.'" But Cornelius rightly takes it for the Blessed Trinity; and this is shown by the Trisagion, as in Isaiah. "As the Son of Man on earth and yet in heaven;"⁶ as in the Hebrews, "To God the Judge of all, and to Jesus;" so here on the throne, yet again as if distinct from the throne, the Lamb.

Various significations are given for these precious stones, as by Aretas. It may be that they represent the various Divine attributes in which "Light and Perfection" is set forth under the manifold changes which arise from the earthly objects or characters with which they are conversant. Jewels, as things taken from earth, but made Divine and pure; of things earthly most precious and durable, enshrining light. If the flower and the grass

⁵ Isa. vi.; Ezek. xi. 23.

⁶ John iii. 13.

speak of the perishable, the sardine and jasper may speak of the unchangeable. But Cornelius à Lapidè considers it as merely expressive of that radiancy of form described in Ezekiel, "as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it;"⁷ which might be described as the red sardine. Fire that burns yet consumes not; the manifold beauty as seen in God.

"*The Rainbow*," the sign of the Incarnation,⁸ the Sun of Righteousness on the waters of Baptism: the bow of the great Conqueror; or His sitting on a cloud, and that cloud, by the light of His Presence, becoming a Rainbow. Aretas speaks of it as the bow of God: "I do set my bow in the cloud."⁹ Bede connects it with the expression, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man."¹ And of the emerald-like appearance he beautifully says, "that inheritance, which fadeth not away, of the saints who are protecting others by their prayers."

"⁴And round about the throne four and twenty seats; and upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment: and on their heads crowns of gold. ⁵And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices: and seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

"*Round about the throne four and twenty thrones*;" not seats, but "thrones." He and they are on thrones, as intimating His rest in the heart of His Saints, and their rest in Him. And "*four and twenty*," for such were the courses of the Jewish Priesthood, which here represent that of the Christian Church. The very number, being twelve of the Law and twelve of the Gospel, may serve to comprehend

⁷ Ezek. i. 27; viii. 2.

⁸ Isa. liv. 9.

⁹ Gen. ix. 13.

¹ Luke xvii. 26.

the twelve Prophets and the twelve Apostles, with other like significations. Or perhaps may stand for the Church of the Jews and of the Gentiles combined. Four and twenty, as Aretas would explain the mystical number, may be the seven, or hallowed creation, multiplied by the holy Three, and the Three added. Bede speaks of the six, implying works completed, in the fourfold light of the Gospel. "And the thrones equal in number," says Aretas, "with those that sit thereon; as places prepared for the predestined number; the kingdom 'prepared from the foundation of the world.'" Thus, "I saw thrones, and they sat" (see chap. xx. 4).

And "*sitting*" in the Sabbatic rest of the Kingdom already come, as the Cherubic movement of the throne in Ezekiel indicated its advance. And "*clothed with white raiment*," as implying the priesthood and atonement: "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness."² "*And on their heads golden crowns*," for they are "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him."³ Thus it is often spoken mysteriously of their "ruling the nations," and their song is, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."⁴

And, as indicating a new dispensation from Heaven and the awful character of every visitation of God, "*out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices*;" "as manifesting," says Ecumenius, "the awfulness of God on those unworthy of His long-suffering; but with the lightnings and voices as to eyes of the understanding, and to spiritual ears of those meet for salvation." With these symbols of Mount Sinai is the Jewish Temple, for there are "*seven lamps of fire*," as in the golden candlestick; but spiritual signs, with the living fire of Godhead,

² Ps. cxxxii. 9.³ Rev. xx. 6.⁴ Rev. v. 10.

*"burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God," i.e. the manifestations of the Spirit in the Christian Church. Thus, "The seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (chap. v. 6). "They are the eyes of the Lord."*⁵ Bede says, "the One Spirit." But Aretas from St. Irenæus and Clement the Stromatist, "angelic ministrations." "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire."⁶

"⁶And before the throne a sea of glass, like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four Living Creatures, full of eyes, before and behind. ⁷And the first Living Creature like a lion, and the second Living Creature like a calf, and the third Living Creature having a face as a man, and the fourth Living Creature like a flying eagle. ⁸And the four Living Creatures having each of them six wings, and full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

"Before the throne a sea," as in the Temple, borne on the sacrificial Twelve, the emblematic laver of regeneration; yet not as there of brass, obscure and enigmatical, but transparent, "of glass like unto crystal;" as intimated perhaps by "the looking-glasses," of which the type was first made in the wilderness.⁷ This is obviously of Baptism; and found in general consent of earlier writers. "The glassy sea of the pure and sincere faith in Baptism," says Bede, "and grace from water transforming into the crystallized precious stone." Baptism as having "the vastness of the sea, the clearness of glass, the firmness and solidity of crystal."⁸ Andreas Cæs: of the empyrean Heavens also; and the waters above the Heavens. The Heavenly Jerusalem itself has "her light like unto a

⁵ Zech. iv. 10.

⁶ Heb i. 7.

⁷ Exod. xxxviii. 8.

⁸ Cornel. à Lapide.

stone most precious—clear as crystal.”⁹ Or as the sea represents multitudes, so the sea in Heaven may be the multitude of the faithful; and clear as glass, sincere and without guile before God; knowing even as we are known. “By the sea,” says Aretas, “intimating the infinite multitude of Divine powers encircling the throne of God. As Daniel says, ‘ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.’”¹ And glassy and crystal-like the transparency of bodiless natures and untroubled serenity of the Angelic life.”

And now, by a very remarkable expression, not merely external to the throne and in attendance on it, but “*in the midst of the throne and round about the throne*,” were “*four living creatures, full of eyes*,” the four Gospels, in which and from which the throne of Christ is revealed in His kingdom. This, the Catholic interpretation, we must take as the basis of all others, or co-ordinate with them. “Like the four spirits of the Heavens,” to which St. Irenæus resembles them, “the four pillars of the Church, on every side through the four quarters of the world, breathing incorruption and giving life to men.”² To which we must also add the further account of St. Irenæus, that it is our Lord Himself as therein revealed: His kingdom in the royal “lion;” His sacrificial and sacerdotal office as represented by the “calf” (or ox); in the “face as a man” His Incarnation or Manhood; His Divinity, or the gifts of His Divine Spirit on the Church, in the “flying eagle.” “Since the Word,” says the same writer, “by Whom all things were made, Who sitteth upon the Cherubims, in manifesting Himself to men, hath given unto us the Gospel of fourfold form contained

⁹ Rev. xxi. 11.

¹ Dan. vii. 10.

² See Stud. Gosp. Part I.

by One Spirit. For the Cherubims being four in form represent the offices of the Son of God.”³ And if it be thus further symbolic of our Lord Himself in His Church, it may be of Himself in His own Body, made up of the elect gathered in from the four winds, of four different characters, as conformable to the four Divine attributes. This acceptance is easy and natural, into which the former necessarily passes by a scarce perceptible transition; and for many reasons more suitable to us than any other. First in that with the Christian Priesthood of the twenty-four Elders, the natural accompaniment is the whole Body of the Elect; and agreeable to what follows of spending day and night in worship; which is more easy as explained of them than of the four Gospels, or of our Lord’s attributes. In the next chapter the Four say “Amen” to the Liturgical Thanksgiving, which is the response of the congregation of the Church. And their song, together with the twenty-four, is, “Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and nation.”⁴ To this may be added, that the word rendered “the Living Creature,” as the expression afterwards translated “Beast,”⁵ seems to intimate a collective body; for though this term (ζῶον) is of good, and the other, in the original Greek, of evil⁶ (θηρίον), yet they are both similar neuter nouns, which serve to represent a multitude. They are nearer than the twenty-four Elders, being not only “*around the throne*,” but also *within*, or “*in the midst of*” it; the same expression in the next chapter is used of the Lamb Himself; which, as it furthers the interpretation of its being certain attributes

³ Hær. lib. iii. cap. xi.

⁴ Rev. v. 9.

⁵ Rev. xiii.

⁶ See θηρίότης. Arist. Ethics.

of Christ, may likewise hold with its being His elect as found in Him, in Whom they live, and move, and have their being. But they are spoken of afterwards as with the Lamb, and therefore in some sense distinct from Him; yet as within the throne, implying some most intimate nearness. Bede says, "It is the Bride, 'all glorious within;' and, at the same time, without 'wrought about with divers colours.'" ⁷ These are more near than the twenty-four, inasmuch as this indwelling of Christ speaks of closer union with Him than any ministerial function can be. Nor is this opinion inconsistent with Catholic interpretation. It coincides with Aretas and Œcumenius, who explain them as the four cardinal virtues as well as the Evangelical emblems. Origen (on Ezekiel) who considers them as certain qualities of the rational soul. Berengaudus, who designates them not only as the four Evangelists, but all teachers of the Church who follow their doctrine. And Haymo, "that, besides the Gospels, they represent the Lord Jesus Christ and all His Saints." This interpretation may also be consistent with that opinion of Mede respecting the origin of these emblems in the Jewish Church, for, like the rest of the symbols, they might be introduced in Christian application; for he considers them as like four ensigns, or the four sides of the Israelite camp, as it proceeded in the wilderness. But it is more probable that their origin is connected with Assyrian hieroglyphic. Aretas speaks of their representing the four elements; others, as the animal creations, deified by Heathens, but here in their place as subserving the throne of God. Such may not interfere with the great Catholic interpretation. Again; as four is of evil and also of good, it

⁷ Ps. xlv.

may be of the animal nature of man sanctified in the New Man.

"*The six wings*," as also the hymn of the Thrice Holy, indicate that together with cherubic forms in Ezekiel, they combine the Seraphim of Isaiah's visions (chap. vi.). "The six being," says Berengaudus, "the perfect number; and the six wings of the four making the mystic twenty-four of the thrones and Elders." "Winging the soul," says St. Irenæus, "to Heaven." The "*full of eyes*" too "*within*" differs from Ezekiel, where the eyes are "round about," and especially the "wheels full of eyes."⁸ For here the wheels are not mentioned; the Thorne is not in motion, but, as in Isaiah, stationary. Further, this representation of the Church is not of its progress on earth, which is afterwards set forth by the angel standing on the earth and sea, but of its pattern as seen in Heaven—the Divine type, not the external and visible historic development. Its extent and progress being symbolized in the tenth chapter. But the four Living Creatures being omitted in the seventh Trumpet,⁹ when the mystery is consummated, seems to intimate that the Gospels, or the Church of the Elect which they represent, must be confined to the six Seals—the period of the world, not entering the Sabbatical termination. There is "no more sea," no more need of sacramental washing, so also no Gospel is needed, when prophecy and faith have gone by, and love alone remains. "The serving God *day and night*," seems also descriptive of the ministering Church.¹

In the expression "*which was, and which is*," the order of the words is changed; for before it had been "which is, and which was" (chap. i. 8); and the reason is obvious, for there our Lord Himself is speaking, "I am He which

⁸ Ezek. x. 12.

⁹ See Rev. xi. 16.

¹ Acts xxvi. 7.

is." But here it is in the order of the Three Divine Persons, "*Which was*," of the Creator; "*Which is*," of the Redeemer; and "*Which is to come*," of the Holy Spirit.

"⁹And when those Living Creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, Who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰The four and twenty Elders fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Worthy art Thou, O Lord, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

The four Living Creatures, or the Church of the Redeemed, give thanksgiving to God for their redemption; and then the twenty-four Elders fall down and attribute all glory to God alone; inasmuch as Prophets, Apostles, and all the ministering Priesthood, rejoicing in the salvation of the Elect, attribute it not to their own instrumentality, but to God. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise."² "Righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces."³ Though made kings of God, yet they cast down their crowns before Him as attributing all true Kingship to God, the One and only Potentate. "Such thanksgiving therefore and praise," says Aretas, "of ministering spirits and men to the Incarnate Son of God is not reserved for the last day, but is even at present." It is moreover, as Mede has observed, the Eucharistic Hymn of the Ancient Liturgies.

² Ps. cxv. 1.

³ Dan. ix. 7.

SECTION II

THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS

CHAP. V. “¹And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong Angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? ³And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. ⁴And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”

The former chapter has set forth the ideal, or prototype of the Church, “according to the pattern” of things heavenly, “showed in the Mount,” and realized in the Church invisible as seen of God. All was the fulfilment of the typical Israel: for the mercy-seat the throne of God; for the ark of the covenant the emerald bow; for the Priesthood of Aaron the twenty-four Elders; the giving out the new spiritual Law in the lightning and thunder voices; for the golden candlestick the seven Churches; for the laver of brass the Baptismal Sea before the throne; for angelic Cherubims evangelic manifestations. And now there remains the great mystery, how it is to be fulfilled; and the scene to be represented is taken from the Prophet Isaiah (chap. xxix.), where, after saying that the Lord had poured out upon the Jews “the spirit of deep sleep,” and that their wise men should not understand His work, he adds, “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed.” It is this book that *the angel strong and with a mighty voice* makes the appeal to men on earth, and angels in Heaven, and the spirits of the departed, to open—in vain. Even of evil spirits we

are told that they understood not beforehand this mystery, or "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."¹ Manifold are the diversities of opinion respecting the meaning of this "*Sealed Book*;" for it is supposed to be the Scriptures, Old or New, or both; or the history of the Church; or the mystery of Christ; or the Apocalypse itself; or part of it, contained under the Seven Seals. But all these are but various modes of expressing the same thing, or some portion of it. For the hidden meaning of Scripture is in fact but the secret history of the Church; and Christ revealing Himself therein: and the Apocalypse and its seven Seals are the same in prophecy. "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself," is the very attribute of "the God of Israel, the Saviour."² And the Apocalypse is the revealing of Himself. He had before "the key of David," which was found to be "the keys of hell and of death;" so here He opens the book of the Scriptures, which is found to be the seven-sealed, or full period of mortal time, thence unfolding into the book of immortality. For surely the book of nature and the book of Providence is perfectly inexplicable; and the Old Testament no less so, as it evidently was to the Jew; but the mystery of Christ unfolds it all,—the seven Horns, though but of a Lamb, are the strength by which the world is overcome; the seven Eyes, the light by which its darkness is made clear. "The number seven," says Aretas, "as marking the period of this life comprised in the changes of night and day." Berengaudus, of the whole course of the world from the creation. So obvious is it a full period of time; and in the most proper sense the complete course of the Christian Church.

Thus this Sealed Book is that of the seven Seals, ex-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

² Isa. xlv. 15.

pressed in figures from the Old Testament and the fulfilment of them, yet hardly to be confined to that alone. It is the unfolding of them in the history of the Church on earth which will be a perfect mystery, which neither angel nor man will be able to understand, labouring in vain to do so; but yet revealed to the Christian. For Daniel says that "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."³ Our Lord gives us to know that good men will discern the signs of the times. St. Paul, "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you." Christ at His first coming was known by His own. It is not scholarship, but holiness. "Mysteries are revealed unto the meek:"⁴ revealed by the Father unto babes, revealed by the Lamb unto His own. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom," but to others "all these things are done in parables."⁵ "He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." Nor in the Prophet Isaiah, from which it is taken, is it the written Word only. Indeed it is more like the strong typical imagery, the hieroglyphic language of the Apocalypse, to consider the Book, like every other part of the vision, to be but figurative. This view seems consistent with the best interpretations, inasmuch as they consider it the Scriptures indeed—but such as revealed by the mystery of Christ and His Church. "The Book is the Scripture," says St. Gregory, "and our Redeemer alone could disclose its mysteries by His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension."⁶ "This vision," says Bede, "shows the mysteries of the sacred Scriptures laid open to us by the Incarnation of Christ; which in union and harmony contains the Old Testament as on the outside,

³ Dan. xii. 10.

⁴ Eccles. iii. 19.

⁵ Mark iv. 11.

⁶ Hom. xvi. in Ezek.

the New within." In another place, "It unlocks," he says, "the future triumphs and conflicts of the Church." Origen, that "the Book is the Scripture, which He only can open Who is the Root of David and hath the key of David; it is written without as to the literal meaning, and within as to the more hidden and spiritual."⁷ Berengaudus also, "of the Old and New Testament." "The folded Book," says Aretas, "indicates that to every creature the judgments of God are past finding out; wherefore they are likened unto the great deep."⁸ Not only is no creature able to open it, but not even to look upon it, that is, unable to gaze intently on the Divine judgments. But the presence of the Lamb has rendered that easy which before was difficult." The six Seals appear to be fulfilled in the forty years in which the Spirit pleaded with Jerusalem before its destruction; this may be the writing "without," as understood by all: but every Seal seems also to have an ulterior fulfilment, which is the hidden sense "written within."

Strong is the Angel and loud the appeal, and in three following verses solemnly repeated, that none is worthy to open it. "The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears."⁹ "I looked, and there was none to help."¹ And the beloved disciple weeps—if Daniel fasted and wept to understand the vision, if St. Paul's love for Israel was so intense that he was willing to die, well might St. John, as an Israelite, weep at the grave of his people. Indeed, St. John is the known type of the Church of Israel. "He represented," says Berengaudus, "those under the old dispensation."

⁷ Philoc. v.

⁹ Job xxviii. 14, 22.

⁸ Ps. xxxvi. 6.

¹ Isa. lxiii. 5.

"Therein," says Ezekiel, "were written lamentations, and mourning, and woe."² So, indeed, throughout it is; St. John mentions not this, but weeps. "He wept," says Bede, "in grief at acknowledging the common misery of mankind." But not only this: it speaks the distress of the first Christians at their perplexity as to the future, of the state of the Church, and the fulfilment of prophecy. And if this is shown by the tears of the disciple now, no less so by the joy and thanksgiving afterwards expressed by every creature. "He wept," says Berengaudus, "because it was so long delayed." "Prophets and kings had desired to see these things, and had not seen them." Nay, more, "which things the Angels desire to look into."

"⁵ And one of the Elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and its seven seals. ⁶ And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four Living Creatures, and in the midst of the Elders, a Lamb standing as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth. ⁷ And He came and took the Book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. ⁸ And when He had taken the Book, the four Living Creatures, and the four and twenty Elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the Saints. ⁹ And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰ And hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign on the earth."

"Weep not." "He is forbidden to weep," says Bede, "for then already was fulfilled in the passion of Christ that mystery which so long had been hidden, when on His giving up the Ghost the vail of the Temple was rent."

² Ezek. ii. 10.

The Elder speaks, for He Who appears in the Old Testament under the sign of "*the Lion of Judah*" in the Law,³ and as "*the Root of David*" in the Prophets, "*hath prevailed.*" The Lion of Judah, the Root of David will open—the kingdom of Christ on earth will make all things plain. He was spoken of as a Lion, but as a Lamb He appears; the Paschal Lamb of the Law; the Lamb of the Prophet Isaiah and of St. John the Baptist: it is the Lamb expressly that opens the Old Testament;—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?"⁴ it is no other attribute or symbol, but the Lamb of God that opens. "*A Lamb standing,*" as ready to aid: "*standing as if slain,*" appearing in the Resurrection with the wounds of death. And He is "*in the midst of the throne,*" as in the bosom of the Father; "*and in the midst of the four Living Creatures and of the Elders,*" as the Mediator between God and Man. And He has seven Horns as Almighty—there was the hiding of His power;"⁵ and seven Eyes as All-seeing, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."⁶

He takes the Book from Him on the throne; as Christ says, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Or the Manhood as from the Godhead receiving His power, the Lamb from Him on the throne. "Of that day and hour," indeed, "knoweth no man; no, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son."⁷ To the Son of Man, therefore, all other things with respect to the end are revealed of the Father. In the "*right hand*" of God are all the orderings of the world; "the Word of God" can alone reveal them. In the right hand of Wisdom is life;⁸ in her left, the riches of this world.

³ Gen. xlix. 9.⁴ Luke xxiv. 26.⁵ Hab. iii. 4.⁶ Prov. xv. 3.⁷ Mark xiii. 32.⁸ Prov. iii. 16.

They worship Him not till He takes the Book and is able to open it ; then do they know Him to be the Lamb of God to Whom all things are given. "John heard of a Lion," says St. Bernard, "and saw a Lamb : the Lamb opened the book, and appeared a Lion."⁹ A lamb becomes a lion ; the meek possess the kingdom ; setting forth in mystery that he who is as a lamb shall be a lion in power ; that to suffer with Him is to reign.

"*When He had taken the Book*"—which he had not yet opened, but was about to open, then the kingdom had come ; and thanksgiving, and glory, and worship, to be reiterated in ever-widening circles unto the end, comprehending all. Berengaudus very well explains it : "They fall before the Lamb, when through meditation of the Divine Scriptures considering the boundless mercy of God they humble themselves in the sight of their Creator, and the more they through humility cast themselves down, the more are they inflamed with love ; for to humble themselves in the sight of God nourisheth love." Thus the vision of this chapter is, in fact, being fulfilled from the Resurrection until the end of the world, which is the opening of the seven Seals. Christ began to open at His Resurrection, is opening still, and in His opening the Church is in spirit giving thanks. And this worship is with "*harps and golden vials of incense*," which are Psalms, and Liturgies, and Prayers. And it is a *new song they sing* ; for in the Gospel is the new wine—a new commandment, a new man, newness of life, a new name, the new Jerusalem, the new birth, a new creature, a new earth, and new Heavens. For He hath made all things new. "The new song as for Christ slain," says Aretas, "and the cleansing of the world. It is for them that are

⁹ In Cornel. à Lapide.

released from the oldness of the written Law, and walk in newness of life, out of all the earth enlightened, and taught by the Spirit songs of thanksgiving. Not every tribe and nation," he adds, "but out of every tribe and nation." Some taken and others left. "*And hast made them a kingdom;*" as the Prophet had said, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."¹ "*And Priests,*" says Berengaudus, "as daily offering that 'broken spirit' which the Psalmist says is 'the sacrifice of God.'"² "*And they reign on the earth;*" for Abraham, Isaac, and the Patriarchs obtained not the promises, but were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; "for the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." And this is that Divine polity or citizenship to which the Law and the Prophets bore witness. And the Saints possess the kingdom,³ that inheritance of the earth which is given unto the meek.

"¹¹ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many Angels round about the throne, and the Living Creatures, and the Elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands; ¹² Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive the power, and the riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. ¹³ And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the power for ever and ever. ¹⁴ And the four Living Creatures said, Amen! And the Elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever."

One remarkable circumstance in this chapter is, that it so much takes in the invisible creation of God, its infinite

¹ Isa. lxii. 3.² Ps. li.³ Dan. vii. 22.

extent and universality. First of all there is "no one in Heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth." And afterwards the song of thanksgiving includes not only "the four Living Creatures and the twenty-four Elders, and of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," but also the "innumerable company of Angels."⁴ One fold under one Shepherd of Angels and men, of Whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named; by Him Who hath broken down the partition wall. The "*ten thousand times ten thousand*" referring to Daniel,⁵ shows that it is but a further extension of his prophecy. And the response is made by "*every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea.*" It appears as if it were a strong, vivid imagery of what our Lord says on rising from the grave: "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth;"⁶ a fulfilment of that mystery to which prophecy testifies, that "all things are put under His feet"⁷ as Son of Man victorious over death; that all creatures made by the Word in six days and hallowed by the seventh shall worship the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. That release for which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain. That mystery to which St. Paul alludes, "that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."⁸ That "He left nothing that is not put under Him."⁹ "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."¹ "The mystery which from the beginning of the

⁴ Heb. xii. 22.⁵ Dan. vii. 10.⁶ Matt. xxviii. 18.⁷ 1 Cor. xv.; Ps. viii. 6.⁸ Phil. ii. 10.⁹ Heb. ii. 8.¹ Eph. i. 21.

world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ."² And hence St. Paul's confidence, "that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."³

SECTION III

THE FIRST SEAL

CHAP. VI. "¹And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four Living Creatures saying, Come and see. ²And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat on him having a bow! And a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering, and to conquer."

Since the vision of the last chapter represented the mystery of the power and worship given to the Son of Man on His being raised to the right hand of God, there now follows in order the emblematic history of His victory on earth from that period. Consequently the first six Seals contain an account of our Lord's coming in judgment on Jerusalem, marking and defining, in their successive stages, the images by which it had already been spoken of in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels; as in Leviticus (xxvi. 25), in Ezekiel (xiv. 12-23), and in our Lord's discourse on the Mount of Olives.¹ As that His discourse does at the same time, and by the same figures, refer to His final coming to Judgment and the last days; these Seals may, of course, likewise have a further reference to the same; and, indeed, from the successive stages and

² Eph. iii. 9.

³ Rom. viii. 38.

¹ Matt. xxiv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xxi.

order in which God's Providences seem to move, it is not improbable. Or it may be that these latter fulfilments are carried out in the seven Vials; for there appears a marked correspondence between the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials—the visitations differing in each successively rather in intensity than in character. “If judgment first begin at us,” says St. Peter, “what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel?”² begin perhaps at us in Jerusalem, and thence fulfilled in the world. Such ulterior accomplishments it is not for us to speculate upon or understand, but the former fulfilment we may see in these exquisitely beautiful figures of Divine imagery; and if we may at all rightly augur of the future, it will probably be by beholding them in this mirror of the past, which is so designedly given us for that purpose. We take, therefore, with Victorinus the discourse on the Mount of Olives for the key to these Seals; and naturally so and of necessity, for our Lord then spake of His successive comings in His kingdom; the Apocalypse therefore of Christ, the opening of the Seals, must be in some sense the same as that discourse.

If these Seals are of awful judgments, of “lamentation, and mourning, and woe,” yet this is only on their earthly aspect; we are to bear in mind, throughout the whole, the previous chapter of the thanksgivings and blessedness of the Redeemed coincident with it. The reference which these judgments have to the plagues in Egypt seems to be, that as then God was about to bring His own out of Egypt, so now out of the earthly Jerusalem, become as Egypt to them; and, in like manner, afterwards His own out of the mystic Babylon under the Vials. It may be owing to this circumstance that the Prophet Zechariah

² 1 Pet iv. 17.

and the vision of horses seems taken for the basis of this prophecy, for that was the bringing of Israel out of Babylon, the establishment again of Jerusalem—the horse is the going forth of “judgment unto victory.”³ Owing to these circumstances the first four of these seven Seals have a distinct character of their own, being composed of the four horses and connected with the four Living Creatures, which severally announce and minister to them; in like manner as the four Seals are but the expansion of that discourse of our Lord’s delivered to the four Apostles,⁴ the setting forth, as it were, in picture or living emblem what was then spoken of. The four Evangelists say, “*Come and see*,” the Gospels will interpret the meaning, Come and behold what therein you read of. These four seals are connected with the Throne of God, as it is supported by the four Living Creatures, “the quadriform Gospel,” “the chariot of the Lord,”⁵ the kingdom of Heaven, the “altar four-square,” or the Atonement spread forth through the world; and first in type through “the cities of Judah” was it to be preached by the Apostles before Christ came to destroy Jerusalem. The number four expresses the idea of solidity, and from thence the material universe; the first number which speaks of what is external to God—the world; and thence the four elements; the four seasons; the four quarters of the globe, but watered by the four rivers of Paradise going forth from one head: Christ in the four Gospels: “the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.”⁶ The four, therefore, is of the kingdom established on a solid basis. “Lift up now thine eyes,” was said to Abraham,

³ Matt. xii. 20.

⁴ Mark xiii. 3.

⁵ Iren. iii. xi.; Jerome, Ep. 50.

⁶ Zech. vi. 5.

“northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.”⁷ Thus was the throne on the four extended. “And then shall the end come.”⁸

“*I heard, as it were the noise of thunder*”—for it is an inspired Evangelist that speaks, or the voice of God ; when God spake unto Christ in St. John’s Gospel, “the people said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake.” Our Lord Himself named the Apostle of love “a son of thunder.” It is, moreover, the Lion that speaks in thunder, the appropriate emblem of this Seal ; for “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” introduces that which is of conquest and dominion. Each of the four mystic Creatures speaks in order, and their individual symbols may be found throughout singly to apply. Here the expression itself is from the Gospel narrative ; “*Come and see,*” as Philip said to Nathanael—“Come and see” if this be not the Christ going forth “*conquering and to conquer.*” This manifestation of Christ differs from the two preceding, and from the emblems of Himself in the parables. It is not the Sower ; nor the King inviting to a feast ; nor a Master calling to account His servants ; nor a Shepherd ; not a treasure hid in a field ; nor a pearl ; but a horseman, indicating dominion ; the King and the Conqueror, the crown and the bow. “Who is this that cometh,” the solitary Rider, “travelling in the greatness of His strength ?”⁹ It is He who again appears with His army on white horses, with many crowns, and with His vesture dipped in blood (chap. xix. 13, 14). He says now, “I have trodden the winepress alone : and of the people there was none with Me.” But hereafter this winepress is trodden by an army of horse (chap. xiv. 20). And the “little one hath become a thousand.”

⁷ Gen. xiii. 14.

⁸ Matt. xxiv. 14.

⁹ Isa. lxiii. 1.

Again; this going forth is from the Old Testament, which supplies all the accompaniments of the picture; as he that calls attention to it is the Lion of Judah. A Conqueror setting forth; "Thou art fairer than the children of men . . . Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty . . . and in Thy Majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness. Thine arrows are sharp. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."¹ He goes forth "*conquering and to conquer*;" "*conquering*" in His first Apostles and Martyrs, and this the pledge of future conquest—of what He is afterwards to do unto the end. If we ask, Why is "*white*" the colour? Bede will answer, "It is the Church made by grace whiter than snow." If we ask, From whence is the *bow*? Aretas replies from the Prophet, "Thou didst ride upon Thine horses, and Thy chariots of salvation: Thy bow was made quite naked. . . . At the light of Thine arrows they went."² Or Tichonius from another, He "hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle." . . . "Out of Him came forth the battle bow."³ Or again, if we ask, What is the "*crown*" which is "*given Him*?" or of what composed is the bow with which He fights? they are His own elect; the same Prophet will supply the answer; "When I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion:" "His arrow shall go forth as the lightning:" "The Lord their God shall save them. They shall be as the stones of a crown."⁴ In these all is of God—of God made Man. Of the "arrows" which so often occur, as in the Psalms and in Job (chap. vi. 4), St. Augustin beautifully says that they are "the words of God, which occasion the wounds of love. For love can-

¹ Ps. xlv. 3; LXX. version.

² Hab. iii. 8-11.

³ Zech. x. 3, 4.

⁴ Zech. ix. 13-16.

not be without pain.”⁵ He is the Lamb in the last vision; He is on the throne in Heaven; “Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thy foes Thy footstool:” yet here He goeth forth on earth in His Apostles and Preachers; and He crowns them, and He in them is crowned. He is Himself their “crown and rejoicing” in those He wins. He in them by Saul was persecuted.

Thus Victorinus, Aretas, Œcumenius, and others unite in the obvious interpretation, that it is Christ going forth as Conqueror in the Apostolic preaching; and victorious against the prince of error. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”⁶ Yea, as His “goings forth have been from everlasting,” even Berengaudus may be explained as seeing the type of this, when he speaks of it as His going forth after the blood of the righteous Abel, in the beginning of the world.

Here He is setting out to take His kingdom; and thus under the seventh Trumpet the twenty-four Elders give thanks, “because He hath taken His great power, and hath reigned” (chap. xi. 17).

SECTION IV

THE SECOND SEAL

CHAP. VI. “³ And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second Living Creature say, Come *and see*. ⁴ And there went out another horse *that was* red; and it was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.”

Thus the Rider on the white horse, “the Angel with the crown of victory,”¹ hath gone forth, having conquered,

⁵ In Ps. xxxvii. 5. ⁶ 1 John v. 5. ¹ Tertull. de Cor. xv.

and continuing to conquer until the end, when He is seen again with many. And now He is attended by three others—not met or encountered by them, but followed; they go forth with Him or after Him; they are, as it were, His retinue; the Riders on the red, the black, and the pale horses. For when Christ goes forth He is attended with His three Judgments—War, and Famine, and Pestilence: His judgments as seen by men, while He is gathering in His elect into that blessed “vision of peace,” the Heavenly Jerusalem: the kingdom of Heaven within, while without there are fightings. “Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife.”² Thus is He travelling always unto the end, and with Him is war. It is probably a general principle, that whenever Christ goes forth to conquer in any place He is followed by strife. The serpent bruises His heel.

St. Augustin speaks of the more obscure similitudes of Scripture as representing truths found elsewhere plainly stated;³ this rule cannot be altogether applied to prophetic visions, and yet it furnishes us with the safest guide as far as we can do so. These proceed in the very order in which our Lord has Himself spoken of them. “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars . . . and there shall be famines and pestilences. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”⁴

The horse is *red*, or *fiery-red* (πυρρός), as intimating bloodshed and war; the colour of the war-horse in Zechariah (chap. i. 8; vi. 2), and of the red Dragon afterwards (chap. xii. 3). And the meaning is here explained, for the Rider is commissioned to “*take peace from the earth*,” according to our Lord’s own expression, “I came not to send peace on earth,” as you might suppose from the

² Ps. xxxi. 22. ³ De Doc. Chr. ii. 6. ⁴ Matt. xxiv. 6, 8, 9.

Prophets, "but a sword." "*The earth*" often signifies, especially in this Book, the land of Judea. And it is of fire also, *fiery-red*; "I am come to send fire on earth."⁵ The *sword* is spoken of in both these two Seals in our English version, but it is not in Greek the same term here as that expressed in the previous Seal as proceeding from our Lord's mouth, *ῥομφαία*; the Greek connects this still more closely with that expression in the Gospels, "the sword," *μάχαιραν*,⁶ of strife, or civil persecution. But the battle-sword, *ῥομφαία*, again occurs in the fourth Seal, with the famine and siege. Here it is emphatically "a great *sword*," as intimating all that prolonged and extensive division and variance, which our Lord describes in these places in the Gospels; as one which will extend to all time, wherever Christ goes forth. This Seal speaks also, no doubt, of martyrdom. It is the surprise of the Prophet, "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?" It is already "with dyed garments from Bozrah."⁷ "The red horse," says Aretas, "is the symbol of the shedding of the blood of martyrs." And of the word "*it was given him*," he adds, "it is the all-wise permission of God, as proving His faithful servants by temptations."

We may observe, that *the second Living Creature* connected with the opening of this *Second Seal*, is the Calf or Ox, which speaks of sacrifice and of martyrdom, the setting forth of Christ crucified. For "dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "The calf," says Aretas, "characterizes the sacred offerings of holy martyrs; as the former symbol was shown to do that of Apostolic authority."

Again; it is the *Second Seal*, the number which of

⁵ Luke xii. 49. ⁶ οὐκ εἰρήνην, ἀλλὰ μάχαιραν. Matt. x. 34.

⁷ Isa. lxiii. 1.

itself intimates division. On the first day, the Lord's day, the light is created, the Word goeth forth, clothed in the vesture of light, on the white horse : but the second day is the dividing of the waters ; the separation between good and evil cannot be without strife and division.

SECTION V

THE THIRD SEAL

CHAP. VI. " ⁵ And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third Living Creature say, Come *and see*. *And I beheld*, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him having a pair of balances in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four Living Creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny; and three measures of barley for a penny: and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

Again we must refer to the Gospels and to the Old Testament for the figurative symbols. Both in Leviticus and in Ezekiel, the suffering and last siege of Jerusalem has this description of corn being sold by *measure*. It is this which is put forth in this striking portraiture of the Horseman with the scales. These are the sevenfold judgments under the dispensation of the Spirit. "If ye will not be reformed I will punish you yet seven times. . . . I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of My covenant . . . and when I have broken the staff of your bread . . . they shall deliver you your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat and not be satisfied."¹ This measuring of corn is often repeated in Ezekiel's vision of the type of a siege. "Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight and with care."² Such

¹ Lev. xxvi. 24-26.² Ezek. iv. 16.

measuring is spoken of in Esdras in a similar passage, when "the souls of the righteous" ask the question, "How long?" it is answered by Uriel, the Archangel, "He hath weighed the world in the balance. By measure hath He measured the times."³

The *horse* is *black*—the colour of gloom; "all faces shall gather blackness;"⁴ but this must not be confounded with the famine of the next Seal; it is scarcity, as yet but incipient and light; "for executing Thy judgments by little and little, Thou gavest them place of repentance."⁵ The denarius, or *penny*, is in the Parable a labourer's wages for a day; and a *measure of wheat* is sufficient to sustain one man: *the oil and the wine* too being as yet untouched indicate mitigation. "All these things," says our Lord, speaking of the "famines in divers places," "are the beginning of sorrows." And it is a *Voice in the midst of the four Living Creatures* which makes this declaration; the voice of God's mercy in the Gospels, as it were from the mercy-seat between the Cherubim, in mitigation of the sentence while hope remained. It is not, Aretas observes, a voice that says, but a voice of one that says. And these circumstances may lead us to see why it should be the *third Living Creature*, viz., that which "had a face as a man," which introduces this Seal. With the "black horse" of mourning is the "Man of Sorrows;" but with human compassions tempering mercy with judgment. The "face of a man" must needs be that of the good Samaritan, who for men half-dead bids spare *the oil and the wine*. Thus Aretas says: "Some say that this third Seal manifests towards us the mercy of Christ, Who hath not dealt with us in strict measure

³ 2 Esdras iv. 35-37.

⁴ Joel ii. 6.

⁵ Wisdom xii. 10.

according to our wickednesses, but by saving doctrines hath been gracious with us."

Although "*the black horse*" speaks evidently of sorrow, yet it is so obviously opposed to the "white horse" that it looks like a failing in the faith; for the white horse is the symbol of that "faith which overcometh the world." This may be faith failing in tribulation. And so the Greek commentator, Ecumenius, suggests, who, in speaking of the famine, says, "The black horse may imply mourning for those who fall away from the faith of Christ on account of these chastisements. And the balance is the weighing or proving of such in those trials; the barley intimating the repentance of those who had yielded from cowardice. And the order not to hurt the oil and the wine is, of not withholding the healing medicines of Christ from those who turn, by which He healed him who had fallen among robbers, and gave him not over unto death."

It might be admissible thus to give all these their spiritual interpretation, but our Lord's expressions on the Mount of Olives must be understood literally; which we have taken for the basis of these figures. The connection also with the other Scriptures indicate such a literal interpretation. But if any one should think the mystic sense more suitable to the Apocalypse, it would admit of being so explained throughout; "not a famine of bread—but of hearing the words of the Lord:"⁶ the Scriptures failing the Jews, while yet the oil of the Spirit and the Blood of Christ prevail, and support the Christians in that desolation. And this is accordant with the subsequent introduction of "the harvest," "the wine," and "the wine-press," in the figurative sense (chap. xiv. 15, 19). Aretas speaks of some who understand it all in this spi-

⁶ Amos viii. 2.

ritual manner ; and he, like St. Augustin in the Gospels,⁷ and others, explains the *wheat* of Evangelical doctrine ; and the *barley* of the Mosaic teaching ; that this famine will be of the bread of life ; that they who in the denarius have the Divine Image stamped on their souls at Baptism will few attain to the Evangelical perfection ; but it will be well if the many will persevere even in the keeping of Mosaic observances. Tichonius speaks of the “wheat” and the “barley” as of Christians great and small in the Church.

Others, again, have explained this Seal of the heresies that arose after the age of persecution ; and the Arian subtleties, when the Word of truth and the Bread of life was weighed in the balance of human disputations. This, indeed, were well. And others have carried on the fulfilment to all times, applying the spiritual interpretation even through these latter days ; that though the Bread of life be scarce, and a low and carnal religion of legal righteousness more common than Evangelical perfection, yet still from the Mercy-seat issues a voice, even unto the end, assuring us that the oil of Christ’s Anointing, and the wine of His saving Blood fail not. But all these are too uncertain to dwell on, as being the things here intended.

Yet still, as our Lord has said, “How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread ?”⁸ if it should be necessary to give any other interpretation but the literal one of bread ; we might consider it, that the *black horse* is the sign of mourning, from the dark shadows gathering around the once Holy City ; the *balances* the weighing of Jerusalem, as Babylon of yore, in the scales where it is found wanting : the *voice from the midst* of the Gospels, of one saying to the Christian,

⁷ In Joan. Tr. xxiv. 7.

⁸ Matt. xvi. 11.

"Thy life is given thee for a prey." The Word of life sufficient for thee; *the oil and wine*, the Spirit and the Blood of Christ, are vouchsafed thee. Or, as Arctas has it, that these may represent the loving-kindness of Christ succouring the wounded man with the oil and wine in the Parable.

It should be necessary to mention that the Seals are not of the Romans, nor of the Jews, but of the Christian Church, and the bringing of the same out of the earthly Jerusalem. It is Christ's coming, indeed, on that city in judgment, as the first enemy of His Kingdom to be subdued in His goings forth on the White Horse, but as carrying on the cause of His Church. In this point of view alone are either Rome or Jerusalem in which once "lodged righteousness, but now murderers," any subject for this Divine Book, only, in fact, as Egypt or Pharaoh were of old. The destruction of Sodom, and judgments of Egypt, are kept as memorials in Scripture, because they were in themselves typical and prophetic; and it is as such that these last visitations on Jerusalem are so prominent, as inwreathed with figures of things hereafter, which will not be known until accomplished, and when accomplished will have ceased to be of interest, being rolled up as a scroll with all things seen and temporal. Yet throughout these Seals, which are of judgments, ever must be kept in mind, as parted only by a slight veil, the scene invisible of the previous chapter, the eternal blessedness of those gathered in from these troubles of the world. The Throne is still with us throughout, supported by the four Evangelists of mercy.

SECTION VI

THE FOURTH SEAL

CHAP. VI. “⁷ And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard *the voice of the fourth Living Creature* say, Come and see. ⁸ And *I looked*, and behold, a pale horse; and he that sat on him, his name was Death! and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and under the beasts of the earth.”

“*The fourth Living Creature*” that speaks is the Eagle, well pointing out to the coming of *Death* on the *pale horse*; for “where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”¹ It is the especial Divine emblem too of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, so as of itself to mark the interpretation. “Where the slain are, there is she.”² It is spoken of here by the Greek commentators as the symbol of Divine vengeance flying swiftly on its prey from afar. The term “*pale*” serves admirably to express the force of the original word, for we use the expression “pale” of the green and livid whiteness of death, the ghastly hue of “the King of Terrors.” And here he appears in strong contrast with the Rider on the white horse, “the Captain of our salvation,” the Giver of life, nay, Life itself; and seen as Conqueror even “in the valley of the shadow of death.”³

The coloured picture that goes forth from this Seal is equally comprehensive, strong, and emphatic with the foregoing. The Seal throughout appears connected with the number Four. “*The fourth Living Creature* ;” and “*the fourth Seal*” with authority over “*the fourth part of the*

¹ Luke xvii. 37. ² Job xxxix. 30. ³ Ps. xxiii. 4.

earth," and the "four judgments." This may signify its full extension or universality. And this again is found in the Prophet Ezekiel, which points it. It is the season beyond hope for Jerusalem—the fourfold Seal, the four times ten years complete, when, if "Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should but deliver their own souls" "when I send My four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence."⁴ The word "pestilence" in Ezekiel, is here in St. John translated "*death*;" for the Greek version renders "pestilence" by the word "death." The expression of "*the beasts of the earth*" in this Seal seems to designate it to be spoken of the same great event which those ancient prophecies intended; for "beasts of the earth," literally, are not the scourge of these last desolations; and while they connect it with the Prophet Ezekiel, yet here must be understood in the usual typical sense of tyrannical kingdoms of the earth. And it must be observed it is not "with" the beasts of the earth, as *with the sword* and the like, but "*under*" their sway, or "*by means of*" their power. The introduction of the term is a part of the manifold extent and depth of Divine mystery. In an apocryphal Scripture they are omitted, while the Four are preserved. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will bring plagues upon the world; the sword, famine, death, and destruction."⁵ The number Four is of universality in all the world, in mercy or in judgment. It is here of both; the fulness, the completion; the Gospel preached in all the world,⁶ or through the cities of Judea; the four-squared Throne spread abroad; the judgments going forth and confirmed. For after this preaching of the Gospel is

⁴ Ezek. xiv. 14, 21.⁵ Esdras xv. 5.⁶ Matt. xxiv. 14.

added, "For then shall be great tribulation."⁷ Thus is the very order of these Seals marked by the discourse on the Mount of Olives, the anchor of Apocalyptic interpretation, which to let go is to launch forth into a sea of endless imaginings. It is simply stated by Tichonius, "These three horses are war, famine, and pestilence, as are foretold by the Lord in the Gospel. The white horse the Word of preaching throughout the world." Further, the Old Testament is inwrought throughout this Book, as intended to instruct us in its mysterious hieroglyphic; and this expression of "death and hell" together occurs in the Prophet Isaiah, when speaking of this judgment, and of Him Who rides on the white horse as the only refuge. "Hear, ye scornful men that rule in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; . . . therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone. . . . And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand."⁸ On the same subject of the judgments on Jerusalem it had been said before, "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure."⁹ "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;"¹ and at the close of the Revelation, we find these two again mentioned together, that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."²

It is difficult to understand the meaning of "*the fourth part*," which is peculiar to this place: "the third part" often occurs, especially throughout the Trumpets, evidently in a mystical sense, which probably is the case here likewise. There is another meaning, which appears in some

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 21. ⁸ Isa. xxviii. 14, 18. ⁹ Isa. v. 14.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 26.

² Rev. xx. 14.

Latin versions,³ “the four parts of the earth,” “by which,” Berengaudus says, “the whole land of Israel is here designated.” In whatever sense it be understood, certainly the Four which marks this Seal signifies fulness and completion; for the judgments are afterwards changed, and a new character pervades the Seals. “Four parts” would correspond with the Old Testament.⁴ The expression *beasts of the earth* can scarcely admit of the literal interpretation. Andreas Cæsarensis, indeed, mentions from Eusebius, that under the persecutions of the Roman emperor Maximin, such multitudes died of famine and pestilence, that they were left unburied. And that in the Armenian insurrection so many were slain, that the dead bodies were devoured by dogs, and probably with them by wild beasts. The expression here occurring after the famine and pestilence, and not as in Ezekiel, might seem to favour this interpretation. Yet in such a case they are not *slain* by the wild beasts; and the martyrs that were killed by wild beasts could scarcely be here intended.

SECTION VII

THE FIFTH SEAL

CHAP. VI. “⁹ And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹ And white raiment was given unto them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.”

³ Quatuor partes. Cornel. à Lapide; quartam partem. Tichonius.

⁴ See Isa. xi. 12; Jer. xlix. 36; Ezek. vii. 2.

And now, under the Fifth Seal, on Jerusalem itself is concentrating the desolation: "For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come."¹ Here we must especially notice that these "*souls under the altar*" are the saints of the Old Testament, and those ancient martyrs whose blood our Lord had so emphatically said should be avenged on Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets!" was her designation; "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."² They had now slain our Lord's own Apostles and martyrs under the former Seals, according to His awful declaration, "Wherefore, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and some of them ye shall kill" Thus they had "filled up," as He had said, "the measure of their fathers:" to which it was added, "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." Here we have, as throughout, our Lord's own expressions as the key for the interpretation. It is thus exactly harmonized, and explained in keeping with itself and with all the Seals. They have "killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets," they have "filled up their sins," and "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."³

It is evident in the description itself that they cannot be Christian martyrs which are spoken of. In the first place, the expression "*under the altar*" arrests attention as peculiar, and associated rather with the Old Testament than the New. We have, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded" (chap. xx. 4), but not "under the altar." Secondly, their not having yet the white robe of Baptism.

¹ Isa. lxiii. 4. ² Matt. xxiii. 35. ³ 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

Thirdly, their having to wait for others on account of something wanting in their condition. Fourthly, their cry for vengeance differs from anything in the New Testament, yet is not unsuitable to the saints of the Old dispensation, and of the same mysterious character as expressions in the Psalms, ere the "new commandment" of love had been revealed, as our Lord intimated to His Apostles, when they would have called down fire from heaven, after the example of Elijah.⁴ For the Law had said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."⁵ The expression also is obviously connected with that of the blood of Abel, "crying unto God from the ground,"⁶ which circumstance our Lord had connected with this vengeance on Jerusalem. Whereas of the blood of Christ it is said that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."⁷ So likewise must that of His saints after Him speak rather of forgiveness than revenge. In the fifth place, and above all, attention to the exact expression of the passage will prove this point; for it is different from that in which Christian martyrs and saints are spoken of in this book. They "*were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*" all mention of Christ is omitted; whereas the later martyrs are slain "for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God" (chap. xx. 4), they have "the testimony of Jesus Christ," expressly at all times (chap. xii. 17; xix. 10; chap. i. 2, 9), or they have overcome the Beast, as subsequently described. Sixthly, the expression translated "*O Lord,*" is not the same as is usually so rendered, but is rather "*the Sovereign Master*" of the Old Testament, and is used indeed in distinction from that of "*our Lord*" as applied to Christ.⁸

⁴ Luke xi. 55. ⁵ Exod. xxi. 23. ⁶ Gen. iv. 10.

⁷ Heb. xii. 24.

⁸ Jude 4.

Again, "*they that dwell on the earth*" is usually, in the Apocalypse, explained of Judea. And lastly, the term "*fellow-servants*" is found in this Book of those different in circumstance and condition, as angels and men—and may combine the saints of the Old and New. It is different from the "brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (chap. i. 9).

Five, the number of this Seal, speaks of what is imperfect; ten is a perfect number indicating indefinite multitude, but five, as half the same, is of incompleteness and deficiency; progressive indeed towards ten, which is of completeness, but as progressive, deficient. If "five" had been found in Sodom, even that deficiency would have been accepted: "five of you," *i.e.* even a small imperfect number, "shall chase an hundred."⁹ But the five multiplied by the ten marks the Jubilee and the Pentecost as advancing towards completion. The number five—as the five barley loaves—speaks especially of the law.¹ Thus the five porches of Bethesda are taken by St. Augustin to represent the Law with the five books of Moses, containing an impotent multitude "waiting," *i.e.* for Jesus Christ and for Baptism; waiting, as here under the Fifth Seal, for the white robe: the five talents are given to be multiplied; the five loaves wait for hallowed increase; the five virgins are but incomplete, being but half of the full number, and are in waiting. Thus this *Fifth Seal* is of those under the Law who are in waiting—waiting for their perfection. They are those of whom St. Paul speaks, that "these all . . . received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."²

⁹ Lev. xxvi. 8.

¹ The Ministry. Second year, p. 357.

² Heb. xi. 39, 40.

On the fifth day the fowls and the fishes were created, but this betokened incompleteness; for the air and the waters were thus filled with life, but not yet the earth. They waited for the sixth day. Again, the fifth commandment is "with promise," it is prospective.

The whole passage alludes to what our Lord had expressed, that their blood should be avenged on Jerusalem, for which, His promise, they are asking "*How long?*" as the Psalmist does. And they are told they are to "*rest for a little season.*" This may be till the end of the "thousand years."³ Thus Tertullian says that "In the Apocalypse the times are prescribed during which the souls of the martyrs under the altar, which plead for vengeance, are to wait;" which he proceeds to speak of as the time of the universal resurrection.⁴ And in another place, "The souls of the martyrs under the altar cry, *How long?* For doubtless the avenging of them is regulated by the end of the world."⁵ Andreas in like manner, "That they are the saints praying for the end of the world; wherefore they are bidden to wait with patience, till their brethren be perfected according to the divine Apostle." But their *brethren* to be *slain* must be those whom our Lord had spoken of as yet to be killed by the Jews, to "fill up the measure of their iniquity," when it all should be visited. There is no reason why it should not refer to both: our Lord comes to avenge them in the destruction of Jerusalem: but yet the "little while," when they shall see Him again, also will be the Day of Judgment: yet to the first, as the strongly-marked and definite fulfilment, and as the pledge of the latter, all things direct our attention: the mirror held out to us wherein we may see as in a glass darkly the great mysteries of the latter

³ Rev. xx. 5. ⁴ De Res. Car. cap. xxv. ⁵ De Orat. ix. 5.

times. Our bearing this in mind will serve to adjust many difficulties and confusions. Thus Aretas suggests it may be "the cry of prophets and wise men before the Incarnation of Christ, impatient of His long-suffering and delay. For before the saving Passion of the Cross, the vengeance of God on unholy men was not so evident." "These things we may adapt to the men who loved God under the Law." But he adds, "It may be more suitable to understand it of the martyrs after Christ." Berengaudus says, "The 'little season' is till the Day of Judgment."

The extraordinary expression of "*the souls under the altar*" may signify under the sacrificial altar, which represents Christ before His coming: the altar under which the blood of the victims was poured;—they died as sacrifices to God under the altar of the ancient sacrifice. Dr. Hammond considers it not the sacrificial altar which was without the veil, but the altar of incense within the veil, which is here described. Cornelius à Lapide, of both altars, the brazen one of sacrifice without, as the place where the bodies were buried; that golden altar of incense within the veil, the nearer presence of God, from which their prayers as incense ascend. "Their souls are in Paradise," says Tichonius, "yet as their blood is shed on earth, it is said to cry from beneath the altar."

Perhaps the "*white raiment*" might intimate some Divine enlightenment, or knowledge imparted of Christ crucified; for the "white" is ever of Christ, and the white robe of His righteousness. Bede says that "the white robes may signify their joy on learning, by the Lord revealing it to them, of the condemnation of the wicked in the end of the world, and of the many who by martyrdom will be associated with them. Thus filled with love and content with that consolation, they wait the

filling up the number of their brethren." Andreas Cæsarensis to this effect, "That although they have not yet received the promises, yet clothed in the white robe of their virtues, and in hope of those things of which the vision is given, they are refreshed in the bosom of Abraham." There are good things which even angels desire to look into: good things beyond all thought of man, which God hath prepared for them that wait for Him. "The saints" shall "rejoice in their beds."⁶

SECTION VIII

THE SIXTH SEAL

CHAP. VI. "¹² And I beheld when He opened the sixth seal; and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; ¹³ And the stars of Heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ¹⁴ And the Heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the rich men, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and freeman, hid themselves in dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ And *they* say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

"*The Sixth Seal*" opens—the consummation of things temporal; and it is ushered in with "*a great earthquake*," which ever in Scripture signifies the removal of things that were by a new dispensation coming in. As the Apostle says, from the Prophet Haggai, "Once more I shake not the earth only," the temporal Jerusalem, "but also Heaven."¹

⁶ Ps. cxlix. 5.¹ Heb. xii. 26.

Aretas, alluding to this St. Paul's explanation of the earthquake as the removal of things, adds, that David applies also the same expression to Israel coming out of Egypt, "The earth shook, the Heavens dropped."² And now, in whatever way the parts of this description may be explained, all the figures are spoken of the destruction of Jerusalem, and occur in the same order as in our Lord's own prophecies. After speaking of the eagles gathering together where the carcase is, as under the Fourth Seal, He proceeds to describe His own coming in the destruction of Jerusalem, as in the Sixth Seal—"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened," and the like, precisely as here given: and then follows His "gathering His elect from the four winds," as in the next chapter; and with it the divine Trumpet follows, as in the Seventh Seal.³

Nor less closely is the destruction of Jerusalem and the New Zion of the redeemed spoken of under these figures in the Prophets; as in Isaiah, "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion."⁴ And the memorable occurrence of all these images in the Prophet Joel has its application to this great event.⁵ Again; those figurative expressions of the Prophets, of their calling on the "*mountains and rocks*" to "*fall*" on them and "*cover*" them, our Lord has Himself taken and stamped with His own authority as having a fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem, when He said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves."⁶ And in comparing it with the Prophet, we find "*the wrath*

² Ps. lxxviii. 8. ³ Matt. xxiv. 29, 31, 32. ⁴ Isa. xxiv. 23.

⁵ Joel iii. 15, 16.

⁶ Luke xxiii. 28, 30.

of the Lamb" thus spoken of; that they shall "go into the clefts of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth."⁷ Adam hid himself among the trees: these will call on mountains to hide them, so far greater their terror and shame. What may be the meaning of these things it is impossible to decide, but that they have a primary subordinate sense as figures is obvious. As this is the Sixth Seal, so on the sixth day and at the sixth hour the sun was darkened at our Lord's death. It may be that He now withdraws His countenance from Israel, "*the Sun*" of Righteousness is turned to "*sackcloth*," and has no light for them; that Church, as the "*moon*," is turned into "*blood*" at that terrible siege; for their "hands are full of blood:"⁸ and her "*stars*" or great ones "*fall*," not by gradual decay—not, as it will be at the end of the world, when the figs are "*ripe*,"⁹ but by untimely violence cast down to the ground. The fig-tree being often put for the synagogue, on which our Lord sought fruit in vain, and cursed from the root. The "*Heaven*" is "*rolled together*" as a book folded up and done with. "It is the Old Testament," says Berengaudus. And St. Austin takes the Heavens for the type of God's Word.¹ In some sense certainly the Heaven or book of that dispensation. "*Every mountain and island were moved from their places*," as in that great change and dissolution of which the Prophet speaks; "The earth is utterly broken, the earth is moved exceedingly."² It is much to be noticed how in the corresponding ulterior fulfilment these same figures increase in power: "when the great Babylon"

⁷ Isa. ii. 21; and Jer. iv. 24; x. 10; xlix. 21.

⁸ Isa. i. 15.

⁹ Chap. xiv. 18; Mark xi. 13.

¹ Conf. xiii. 18.

² Isa. xxiv. 19.

falls, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found."³

The sublimity and vastness of the expressions by which the destruction of Jerusalem is described raise our thoughts to those greater visitations in which they will be finally fulfilled, when in a fuller sense "the great day of His wrath is come." "*The great, the rich, the mighty, the kings, and captains,*" may be those "ten kings" so mysteriously described with the Beast, for ten is of multitudes. And the "*falling*" of the "*stars*" may have a reference to that time when Antichrist shall cast down the stars of Heaven to the ground, and stamp them under his feet.⁴ "In the end," says Aretas, "with exceeding vastness, and not in any one part of the world as on Jerusalem, but in a surpassing manner to the whole world, will occur the great tribulation on the coming of Antichrist; in which on those pre-eminent in worldly authority, whom he hath set forth as kings, or of ecclesiastical order, whom he hath figuratively named mountains and islands, that fearful tribulation will be brought." The number six, as Bede remarks on the sixth Epistle, is of Antichrist. This seems to be the object of those vast and overwhelming figures by which things are described, casting their huge shadows long before and covering all lesser fulfilments in the untold consummation yet to be, to which they point and tend. For this reason it appears to be that all these signs of the sun, moon, and stars, and the like, are not confined to Jerusalem, but are descriptive of the fall of other cities and nations; as of Babylon,⁵ of Idumea,⁶ and of Egypt.⁷ These, fixed by our Lord on Jerusalem, combine together to point out the way to their one great final meaning.

³ Rev. xvi. 20. ⁴ Dan. viii. 10. ⁵ Isa. xiii. 10.

⁶ Isa. xxxiv. 4.

⁷ Ezek. xxxii. 7.

The language of God must be that of mystery—cannot be that of exaggeration or hyperbole.

The chief error in expositors appears to be in this case, as on the discourse on the Mount of Olives, when they interpret it in one sense to the express exclusion of the other. But in these Apocalyptic visions the first sense is the most safe, less liable to mislead in the region of vague conjecture, conduces more to elucidate the order of the Seals, and assists to the fuller enunciation of the same under the Trumpets and Vials. It is the Divine custom to combine literal and spiritual meanings, and to intend by the same words successive fulfilments. For Judgment moves cycle on epicycle—thus sending warning shadows before, that wisdom may teach through analogy.

Early interpreters did thus understand it of the two events, dwelling sometimes on one, and sometimes on the other. “Some,” says Aretas, “have taken all these things of the siege under Vespasian. But most interpreters have spoken of the earthquake as the great change which will take place in the persecutions in the time of Antichrist.” The same writer applies this Sixth Seal to our Lord’s Passion when He perfected our salvation, spoiled the enemy, and led captivity captive. It is obvious that six is of consummation. Bede, while he explains this Seal of the days of Antichrist in like manner as Victorinus, yet connects it with our Lord’s crucifixion, as affording the clue to that interpretation;—that the sun being black will be the power of Christ covered, or His doctrine obscured by the ministers of Antichrist; the moon becoming blood, of the Church pouring forth her blood for Christ; and the stars, of those who appeared to be of Heaven, but are proved to be of earth by the wind of that last persecution. It is possible that these things might

have had a fulfilment at our Lord's death—as in our Sun then darkened, and Apostles failing—as a pledge that it would be so in the trials prefigured by it to the end of the world;—that He would be the stay of His members, though, as the sun in sackcloth, with “no form nor comeliness,” and “no beauty that we should desire Him.”

The Book “rolled together” is explained by Bede, as by Tichonius, that as a volume when closed hides its mysteries within, so the Church will then be only known by its own. Anselm—that the Church with her sacraments will be withdrawn from view and public celebration. Aretas speaks of it as Heaven like a scroll in a noiseless manner and in a moment unfolding. “It implies not,” he adds, “the entire vanishing away,” but as St. Irenæus (lib. v.) observes, “not that the substance of the creation will be done away with, but the fashion of it changed—as David says, ‘Thou shalt renew the face of the earth,’⁸ not change.”

Berengandus well explains why it is all here applied to Jerusalem: “The opening of the sixth Seal,” he says, “pertains to the overthrow of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles. And as Christ had spoken of this in parables and done things with this design, in the opening of the sixth Seal He clearly discloses the same by the inspiration of His grace. And by the earth Judea is meant!” Even Mede, indeed, so far well says, “This is the first completion of the victory of Christ, of which the foundation was laid in the first Seal.” It is the single Horseman on the white horse; and if so fulfilled in His single going forth on Jerusalem, what will it be when He appears again with His armies on the white horses in the final consummation? If it be questioned who the Conqueror

⁸ Ps. civ. 30.

is on the white horse, the answer is here given ; it is He Who not only has War, and Famine, and Pestilence in His power, but also He Who made and has in His hand the sun, moon, and stars, and brings them forward to bear witness to His judgments.

The expressions of this Sixth Seal are, doubtless, used of the end of the world, as St. Peter speaks of "the Heavens passing away with a great noise,"⁹ and the like. And Tertullian, speaking of the passage in St. Matthew (chap. xxiv.), adds, "After He had said that Jerusalem would be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, thence He foretells that on all the world, according to Joel and Daniel and the whole council of the Prophets, there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars."¹ But here these signs are followed by circumstances in the Seventh Seal, which show that it is not that final consummation ; they must, therefore, apply to some other great event, which is the symbol of that last Day. And as it is evident from our Lord's prophecy that Jerusalem's destruction typified the end of the world, and the preceding times the Gospel till the end, therefore the Six Seals may further be prophetic of the Church till the last, and the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem therein may set forth the destruction of Antichrist. But the order of the Apocalypse requires the first meaning.

SECTION IX

THE SEALING

We must now bear in mind the Divine and exquisite arrangement of this Book, as well as the wonderful power and fulness of each mysterious word ; for the very order

⁹ 2 Pet. iii. 10.

¹ De Res. Car. cap. xxii.

is wisdom ; and every figure a sacrament ; and every word from the treasury of God. The number six is of completion ; the six Seals have filled up the temporal Israel ; the forty years wherein the Spirit pleaded are numbered ; the book is folded up and finished ; and the hallowed seventh, the number of Rest, is of a different character to the six ; filled with the seven Trumpets which usher in the Great Jubilee—the seventh day which has no evening. But before the seven Epistles there was the mystical vision of Christ, which was found to pervade, as by a Divine presence, all the Epistles that followed ; and before Christ went forth victorious over the grave in the six Seals to destroy Jerusalem, it was preceded by the vision of the Throne of God in Heaven. And now before the opening of the seven Trumpets, with their earthly aspects of judgment and woe, there is the Heavenly vision of the Blessed for us to bear in mind throughout : as the Transfiguration on the Mount prepared the disciples for their trials below. The faithful remnant gathered and gathering in, the unseen Bride, is ever intimately near.

Now it must not be supposed that the seven Trumpets of the seventh Seal commence at the end of the six Seals on Jerusalem being destroyed, as if they were merely a continuation of the same subject ; but as the seventh Day, which is of Rest, differs from the six preceding Days, so the seventh Seal, containing the Trumpets, has a new subject and a new character, namely, the going forth of the Gospel from Jerusalem. Thus first of all in the first Trumpet is again recapitulated the fall of Jerusalem itself, as the prophetic visions of Daniel and Ezekiel often introduce the same subjects again in new aspects and relations. This circumstance renders it unnecessary to connect this numbering of Israel with the preceding Seals ;

and allows us to consider it as preliminary to the seven Trumpets, although the sealing of the Elect is connected with the destruction of Jerusalem. For the command to restrain the four destroying winds till the children of God are sealed, is the description of what is fulfilled in all the Scriptural types;—Noah out of the world; Lot out of Sodom; Israel out of Egypt; and, again, captive Israel out of Babylon; and at last, the children of God out of the mystic Babylon before the approaching destruction takes place, when it is said, “Come out of her, My people, that ye receive not of her plagues.” As in the parables of the end—the wheat gathered into the barn, the good fish into the vessels. There is also another reason for the sealing of the twelve tribes being here introduced in connection with the next Seal. Throughout the Apocalypse the Israel is never to be lost sight of, the Jerusalem of the Old Testament unfolds itself into the New; and the “Jerusalem from above” is contained throughout the old as much as in the new dispensation. Ancient Israel is the type and figure throughout; or rather it is the very germ, containing in hidden outline that which is to be developed in life.

This vision, then, may describe the Saints here on earth sealed by the Spirit of God, and prepared by His grace to abide faithful in these conflicts that ensue. “He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. . . . At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh.”¹ It seems to set forth the fulfilment of the Prophet; “And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, when it shall hail, coming down on the forest.”² The hail and the forest of the first Trumpet. Light in

¹ Job v. 19, 22.

² Isa. xxxii. 18, 19.

Goshen amidst the darkness of Egypt, and safety in its plagues.

For the explanation of it we must as usual have recourse to Scripture itself. And first of all we shall find it in the marking the houses of the children of Israel with the blood of the Lamb before the destroying Angel passes through Egypt.³ We have a still closer account of it in the Prophet Ezekiel (chap. ix. 4). The six Angels of destruction are seen, the word is gone forth to destroy the city; "the glory of the God of Israel was gone up, from the cherub whereon he was, to the threshold of the house." "And the Lord said unto the man, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations:" as in another Prophet, "A book of remembrance was written before Him. . . . And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."⁴ And St. Peter, in his great sermon of Pentecost, has strongly marked it as the fulfilment of the Prophet Joel, that when "the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood," *i.e.* at the destruction of Jerusalem, as we have seen in the sixth Seal, "whosoever shall call on the Lord shall be saved."⁵ "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." "There is a remnant according to the election of grace."⁶ Our Lord's own words, then, bear out the same with greater fulness and exactness, combining also in the fulfilment the final one of which itself is the type. In all the accounts it is the critical moment of destruction at which this pause is made, and this in the Apocalypse lies between the two descriptions, that of Ezekiel and the Gospel. "And

³ Exod. xii. 13.

⁴ Mal. iii. 16, 17.

⁵ Acts ii. 20.

⁶ Rom. xi. 2, 5.

He shall send His Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds."⁷

The change which now takes place in the Apocalypse is expressed by the very names of the Seals and Trumpets in the course of the Church's history; the six Seals are before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore it is a sealed Volume, as not fully opened and declared till the seventh; which by the seven Trumpets, implying open annunciation as opposed to Seals, is the expansion of the Christian Church on the destruction of the Jewish. For this manifestation in the calling of the Gentiles St. Paul speaks of as the great hidden "mystery," as it were sealed up, but now by the Trumpets revealed; "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ."⁸ Yet ushering in progressive developments in extending cycles.

Cornelius and others connect this seventh chapter with the former six Seals; but Mede is right in attaching it to the seventh. For there is a full termination at the sixth Seal; this begins expressly with "*After these things.*" And the things then specified are "the earth, the sea, the trees," the imagery of the Trumpets, and mentioned as affected severally under them, not under the Seals. It is said under the fifth Trumpet that the locusts should hurt "only those men who have not the seal of God on their foreheads" (chap. ix. 4). And the Sealed are afterwards introduced under the Trumpets, in distinction from those who have the mark of the Beast (chap. xiv. 1-5). "This sealing of the Saints," says Alcazar, "pertains not to the sixth Seal, but is the preamble of the seventh."⁹ It is,

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 31.

⁸ Eph. i. 10.

⁹ Apud Cornel. à Lapide.

indeed, most properly connected with the Trumpets, for they are of the Church of God—the coming of the Angel from the East—like the calling of the Israel of God out of Egypt; and though intimately connected with the fall of Jerusalem, yet it rather is in a momentary pause preceding that event than after it had passed: whereas it is here in place with reference to the Trumpets, inasmuch as the fall of Jerusalem occurs again in the first Trumpet, but under a different aspect to that of the Seals.

CHAP. VII. “¹ And after these things I saw four Angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that a wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. ² And I saw another Angel ascending from the East (*or* from the sun-rising), having the Seal of the Living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³ Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

In the first verse the expression “*of the earth*” is three times repeated, as intimating the singular care of God for His elect in the destruction of Jerusalem; the term “earth” signifying the land of Judea, as St. Augustin has shown¹ it often does in Holy Scripture; and especially, as Hammond here remarks, in the imagery of this Book. Thus in Ezekiel we have this very expression; “Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, An end, an end is come upon the four corners of the land.”² And “*the sea*,” here added, might possibly in like manner indicate the Israel scattered through the nations. The “*four Angels*” seem to be “the four spirits of the Heavens,” the restraining powers of God’s Providences in the world, and these under the ordering of that “*Angel*

¹ In Ps. xlv. 6.

² Ezek. vii. 2.

coming from the East having the Seal of the Living God ;" the East ever intimating Christ and His Gospel, as Himself called the East, and the Morning Star, and the rising Sun of Righteousness. And "*with a loud voice,*" as heard through all the world and through all time ; the care of God for His elect controlling all things. And these judgments are expressed through the sufferings of creation. "As for our sakes," says Cæcumenius, "the creature was made, when we are chastened it partakes of the scourges, as when the saints are glorified together with them shall it be made bright." Again : the mysterious chain of numbers will be seen to carry on some obvious connection with things hereafter ; in that here in the pause of the sixth Seal the four spirits, as it were at the four corners of the earth, are bound by the voice of the Angel coming from the East ; and, in the sixth Trumpet, the four Angels at the river Euphrates are loosed in order to prepare the coming from the East.

"The four Angels," says Aretas, "guarded the four corners of the land of Judea." "But though this be so, yet more fully in the coming of Antichrist not of one part only, as of Judea, but to the four corners of the whole world, the East, North, West, and South will there be appointed ministering spirits, fulfilling their service ; restraining the winds from that dissolution of the world and those evils which none can escape." "In that season of Antichrist the seal of the life-giving Cross will be more manifest on those that bear the stamp of Holy Baptism." Early writers see Antichrist in all evil and the judgments of this Book ; and they were right, for "there are many Antichrists." But, over and above this, the Jews have with Antichrist some mysterious connection. The destruction of their nation under the sixth Seal was

seen to have some remarkable reference to the season of him whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of His coming.

They are "*sealed on the forehead*," and sanctified to God, as "upon Aaron's forehead" was graven "Holiness to the Lord."³ This seal may signify Baptism, "sealing by the spirit of promise," "the Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."⁴ But perhaps something yet more secret; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His."⁵ And to ourselves made known so far only as His "Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."⁶ This sealing might be the preparation, by the witness and seal of the Spirit, of all good men, for whose sake the judgments of God were deferred for forty years after the Crucifixion.

"⁴ And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.*"

The Greek commentators speak of this sealing being fulfilled in those many Jews who, sealed by faith in Christ, were not destroyed in Jerusalem, but escaped. And we have the testimony appealed to by St. James of the "many thousands of the Jews who believed."⁷ "Or," adds Aretas, "more probably it is spoken of those Jews in the end, of which St. Paul says, 'so shall all Israel be saved.'"⁸ But this sealing cannot be interpreted of merely the escape of those Christians, it is stamped throughout with a higher signification also; and the exact specification of number would prevent our limiting it or applying

³ Exod. xxviii. 36-38.

⁴ Eph. iv. 30.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁶ Rom. viii. 16.

⁷ Acts xxi. 20.

⁸ Rom. xi. 26.

it too much to any such fulfilment. But the definite precision of numbers indicates a dispensation completed and terminating—the folding up of the Book and rolling away of that Heaven; and is thus placed in distinction to that unnumbered company afterwards described, “the fulness of the Gentiles,” come in, and yet coming, and to come. And this latter put in indefinite number, forbids our applying the sealed thousands of Israel to the whole who may come in from Israel alone into Christ’s Church: for after the destruction of Jerusalem the Jew may be considered as no more in some sense. However that may be, the number intimates the completion of that mystery: the unnumbered company, the gathering in as yet unconsummated.

It is evident that this numbering of the twelve tribes of Israel implies that hidden perfection “according to the pattern shown in the Mount;” that as the Gospel is hidden in the Law, grows out of it, and does not supersede it, so is the Christian Church with the Jewish, they both make up the Israel of God. For this mystical number of the Sealed in Heaven afterwards occurs in the vision of the Redeemed in the fourteenth chapter. They are then with “the Lamb on Mount Sion,” as opposed to the two Beasts previously described; and are represented as “the first-fruits to God and the Lamb,” the Judaic Christian Church, the “Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile.” And subjoined to them, as corresponding with the innumerable multitude here described, is the Angel preaching the everlasting Gospel to those “that dwell on the earth, and every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people” (chap. xiv. 6). But these of the twelve tribes are not here represented as in Heaven, but only as sealed of God, and numbered as the children of Israel were numbered

when they came out of Egypt. When these are afterwards described in the fourteenth chapter, it is marked that not the connection with the temporal Israel, but their purity and perfection before God is the seal of their high adoption and enrolment.

The exact numbering of the Sealed intimates the secret predestination of God, Who "telleteth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names ;⁹ with Whom the "things which be not are as though they were." But the number is one of mystical import ; the twelve of the patriarchal Israel multiplied by the twelve of the Apostolic Church of Christ, "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," and then multiplied by ten, the gathering in of individuals. And to the Jew they intimate the fulfilment of all the promises made to Abraham and Israel on their receiving the seal of Christ. Moreover, the Church of Israel is limited, definite, and numbered ; the courses of the priesthood were fixed ; their people numbered ; their Temple was measured ; their chief priest was one ; one the golden candlestick, or, if ten¹ in the Temple, it was still of unity in many. And when this was fulfilled in the Christian Church, still it partook of that character ; four Gospels ; twelve Apostles, exact and complete ; the city of Jerusalem from above is measured ; twelve foundations ; the size, the wall, the gates, and the like, each and all numbered by the twelve. Therefore they of the spiritual Israel partake of this definite character. When the Church was expanded from Israel and became universal, this definite character passed away in its visible expansion ; but still the archetype in the Jerusalem from above preserves the same. "The great city, the new Jerusalem, that cometh down from Heaven,"

⁹ Ps. cxlvii. 4.

¹ 1 Kings vii. 49.

has "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (chap. xxi. 12). Throughout the ancient Israel is preserved as the type, and pattern, and "figure of the true."² There lie concealed in this subject latent correspondencies which it is not for man to unravel: most errors in interpretation have arisen from confounding the earthly and temporal with the heavenly and eternal archetype.

Again; the reason why Israel is numbered, but the Gentiles are numberless, is because Israel is completed, the Gentiles are not: and therefore the former may not only in themselves be a fixed and predestined number, but serve as such to represent the final numbering of the Redeemed. And this will explain the difficulty some have, whether these numbered are the same as those afterwards spoken of as without number. They may be in one sense, but not in another. The finally saved are a fixed number known to God. The elect on earth are altogether unnumbered: as God said to Abraham, "Look now toward Heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them;"³ though their secret number be indeed fixed of God, who "calleth them all by their names."

First of all, then, speaking of the typical Israel, are described a predestined number of the elect in the mystery of that Divine pattern; and then the gathering in of a number innumerable, to fill up that secret number known to God. For it seems to signify that a mysterious definite number in the foreknowledge of God will regulate that indefinite gathering in of the Church visible afterwards to be mentioned. And hence our Church prays, in the Burial Service, that it will "please God shortly to

² Heb. viii. 5; ix. 23, 24.

³ Gen. xv. 5.

accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom"—*i.e.* to fill up that predestined perfection expressed by the expansion of the Twelve and Ten combined, the numbered stars which are to pave the measured floor of Heaven.

Again ; if it be asked why the number Twelve has this sacred meaning ; it seems to be that as Three which is of God, added to the Four which is of the world, makes up the sacred Seven ; so the Three multiplying the Four composes the sacred Twelve. For this reason, as in the Seven there is a distinction often made between Three and Four ; so the number Twelve in the Old Testament is often distributed into its component parts of Three and Four : as the twelve precious stones were expressly in four rows of three ;⁴ so also the twelve oxen ;⁵ the twelve gates ;⁶ on the altar of Mount Carmel of twelve stones water is thrice poured from four barrels.⁷ From this it would appear that the number of the elect in this chapter is connected with the former mysterious vision before the opening of the seals ; for there we had the Throne supported, as it were, by the Four ; or the Lamb in the midst of the four Living Creatures. Here we have the same when manifested to the world. The Three of the Divine Presence multiplying the Four, and it becomes Twelve. The Blessed Three sanctifying the world. And to this is added the thousand, which implies, says St. Augustin, universality.⁸ It is the Ten which is the aggregate and accumulating of individuals ; bringing the many to one, which is the unity of God. The Word of God multiplied an hundredfold.⁹ Thus, of the first

⁴ Exod. xxxix. 10, 13.

⁵ 1 Kings vii. 25.

⁶ Ezek. xlvi. 30, 35.

⁷ 1 Kings xviii. 31, 33, 34.

⁸ De Doctr. Chr. iii. 51.

⁹ Matt. xiii. 23.

Apostolic Church,¹ the names altogether were one hundred and twenty, the square of which, multiplied by the ten, will give this number. The Twelve of the Church gathering and controlling the Ten of the world's multitude. One hundred and twenty years was also the period of Noah's preaching.² Thus the twelve numbered by twelve, the square of twelve, is the established perfection of the Church; the ten with its multiples the complete aggregate of individuals. The twelve multiplying itself; and limiting the tens by building on that foundation; perfection combined with universality. Thus Bede says, "By this finite number is signified the innumerable multitude of the whole Church, which, from the patriarchs either according to the flesh or in faith, is the Church of the First-born. For if ye are Christ's, it is said, ye are Abraham's seed. And the increase of this perfection is the multiplying of twelve by twelve, and the consummation in the thousands, which being the solid square of the number ten, signifies the living stability of the Church. Which is often figured by the number twelve, as representing the fourfold world in the faith of the Trinity."

"⁵ Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁶ Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁷ Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁸ Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand."

The order of the tribes here given is not that of their nativity, nor of anything in their local position or relative

¹ Acts i. 15.

² Gen. vi. 3.

superiority in honour, power, or numbers, and therefore many reasons have been suggested for it. On the surface this seems to represent that all earthly or temporal distinction is lost in this divine sealing; that "in Christ there is neither bond nor free."³ For the children of wives and handmaids are reckoned promiscuously. While the omission of Dan and Ephraim, both leaders of apostasy, suggests that the whole is arranged with definite design. Of this position in which the tribes are placed, Mede well observes, "It can by no means be doubted but that some remarkable mystery of a typical kind lies concealed under such a novel and unusual order." He attempts to explain this mystery from the sacred history of the tribes, or the meaning of their respective names. Aretas, Ecumenius, Primasius, Berengaud, Bede, and others have done the same; and very ingenious and beautiful are their suggestions. "Not," says Bede, "the order of earthly generations, but according to the interpretation of the names, as setting forth the virtues which from present confession and praise hasten to the right hand of eternal life." Alluding to Juda, the first, whose name signifies 'Praise,' and Benjamin, or 'Son of the Right-hand,'⁴ the last mentioned. "By the hundred and forty-four thousand," says Berengaud, "are designated the elect of the present Church. All who keep the faith of the twelve Apostles and imitate their acts, consist in this number. But we may inquire why they are said to be gathered out of every tribe of the children of Israel, when many more believe out of the Gentiles than from among the Jews. But if we attend to the interpretation of the names we shall find all the elect in the number of the twelve tribes."

Levi, who had no inheritance among his brethren in

³ Col. iii. 11.

⁴ Gen. xxix. 35; xxxv. 13.

the earthly Canaan, yet is not excluded from his share in the heavenly; which indicates that to have been more truly their intended land of promise. The abundance of blessing pronounced on Joseph has its fulfilment in that he has here *added*⁵ to him a double portion in two sons, having himself, as well as his son Manasses, the number of twelve thousand sealed. While the names of Ephraim and of Dan, perhaps on account of their idolatry, are altogether suppressed. For they were both, on the two great occasions of idolatry, the promoters of it.⁶ Bethel, which belonged to Ephraim, and Dan were its strongholds. This substitution of one name for another teaches us of that awful mystery of blotting the name out of the Book, and another taking the crown (chap. iii. 5, 11). The omission of Dan cannot be accounted for, as Hammond suggests, in the dwindling away of that tribe; nor is any adequate reason assigned; but it is well known that the opinion has always descended in the Church which connects Antichrist with the tribe of Dan. In mentioning which, St. Irenæus introduces the words, "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones."⁷ It may be observed that in the passage of the Prophet Jeremiah to which he alludes, it is added, "Behold, I will send serpents among you which will not be charmed;" and that the Antichristian powers under the sixth trumpet are described as horses with serpent-tails; and the adder is the well-known emblem of Dan. He is "a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horses' heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."⁸

⁵ Gen. xxx. 24; xlix. 22-26.

⁶ Judges xvii. xviii; and 1 Kings xii. 25, 29.

⁷ Jer. viii. 16; Adv. Hær. lib. v. ⁸ Gen. xlix. 17.

The Rider in the Apocalypse, with the company that follow Him on white horses, is "the seed of the woman," whose heel the great serpent shall bruise. St. Augustin, speaking of Dan's not having obtained its adequate allotted inheritance in the land of Canaan,⁹ adds, that the reason of it "must be believed to be in the secret counsel of God. But Jacob, when he blessed his sons, spake such things of that Dan, that it may be supposed that Antichrist is to arise out of that very tribe."¹ It is remarkable that this opinion in ancient writers does not profess to be grounded on this omission in the Apocalypse, more than on the other reasons,—the prophecy of Jeremiah by St. Irenæus; that of Jacob by St. Augustin. Aretas, speaking without hesitation of Antichrist being of the tribe of Dan, alludes to the meaning of the name, connected with the warnings, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" And "Judge not, that ye be not judged." And certainly severe judgment strongly marks the impenitent Jew reproved of St. Paul.²

It does not appear so probable that a literal fulfilment is to be expected of Antichrist arising out of that tribe,—a matter of little moment, and apparently impossible to be ascertained,—as that the circumstance should contain some mysterious spiritual prediction. One of the twelve patriarchs is "a serpent;" and disappears from the Book of Life; one of the twelve Apostles is "the son of perdition," the very name of Antichrist. Cornelius à Lapidè speaks of the omission of Dan and substitution of Levi as representing the fall of Judas and St. Matthias taking his place. Thus do these two combined, as with a finger, point onward, intimating the direction of prophecy. In fine, the name Dan is familiar to us in Scripture as con-

⁹ Judges xviii. 1. ¹ Quæst. in Jes. Nav. lib. vi. 22. ² Rom. xi.

neeted with the golden calves of idolatry ; he is the adder, the symbol of evil, in Jacob's prophecy ; together with which is inwreathed the interpretation of his name, that he "shall judge his people ;" a prophecy which connects it with the twelve Apostles, who shall "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

SECTION X

THE PALM-BEARING MULTITUDE

CHAP. VII. "9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; 10 And they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four Living Creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen : The blessing, and the glory, and the wisdom, and the thanksgiving, and the power, and the might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

"A great multitude innumerable," in distinction from the sealed in number ; for though God be the author of order, not of confusion, and hath ordained all things, "in measure, and number, and weight," yet as the Church is gathering from all lands and through all time, it is necessarily unnumbered, and innumerable "as the stars of heaven" and "the sand by the sea-shore ;" while all are "compelled to come in" without order, or "the violent take the kingdom by force." "Of all nations," for her vesture is "wrought about with divers colours ;" of kindreds, as all one in Christ, the Second Adam, in Whom is neither Jew nor Greek ; of peoples, as the voice of many waters ; and of all tongues, as moulded into harmony and

the one language of the Spirit; the many-tongued Babel becoming the new Jerusalem of Pentecost, "of one heart and of one mouth:" *before the throne* and *before the Lamb*, for they "shall see Him as He is," they shall "ever be with the Lord:" in *white robes*, as priests for ever clothed with the Sun of Righteousness; and with *palms in their hands*, as more than conquerors through Him that loved them. And when they attribute *to God and unto the Lamb* their salvation, the angels adore and fall down; for "angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto Him,"¹ there is "joy in the presence of the angels" over one sinner repenting. "Not that company," says Bede, "not the Living Creatures, nor the elders, but the angels only thus worship." "Let all the angels of God worship Him."² "To the number seven," says Aretas, "proceeds the expression of worship, not only as the number analogous to the present world, but as the highest number under ten capable of being produced by no other; so God, to whom these things are attributed, can derive them from no other." "They sing salvation to God," says St. Augustin, "with a loud voice, who recollect with great thankfulness, that they have overcome in tribulation not by their own virtue, but by His aid."³

"¹³ And one of the elders answered; saying unto me, These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? ¹⁴ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor

¹ 1 Peter iii. 22. ² Heb. i. 6. ³ Serm. i. De Sanctis.

any heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

One of the Elders inquires;—even as the angels in Isaiah, "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" Perhaps it is one of the Elders of the Old Testament asking as in surprise, whence these Gentiles come. And the reply is, "*Thou knowest*;" for even the prophets of the Old Testament declare it, as our Lord was ever wont to point out to the Law and the Prophets; and the Elder then gives the Divine and most beautiful description, passing into the very words and figures of the Old Testament. "*They come out of the great tribulation*"—they are those who take the kingdom by force,⁴ but inherit it not: they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom, with the twelve-sealed company, the Church of the patriarchs and twelve tribes. "The great tribulation" mentioned on the Mount of Olives,⁵ and on the coming on of which the elect of Israel are sealed at the opening of this chapter, those early persecutions which are the great signs and preludes of Antichrist; types and antitypes which mysteriously blend beyond man's power to separate. Andreas, Tichonius, Berengaud, Alcazar, and others consider these the same as the sealed of Israel. "He said not," says Tichonius, "after this I saw another people, but, 'I saw a people;' that is, the same which he had seen in the mystery of the hundred and forty-four thousand: this he saw innumerable of every tribe and tongue and nation, for all nations are inserted in the stock of believers. The Lord in the Gospel shows the whole Church, as well of Jew as of Gentile, are in the twelve tribes of Israel, saying, 'Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

⁴ Matt. xi. 12.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 21, 29.

Israel.””⁶ Another question is, whether all this description is of the Church in Heaven or in earth ; and the fact is, that like the expression “the kingdom of Heaven,” and many others of the same kind, it applies to both ; and is doubtless intended to do so ; in its fulness hereafter, but even now in part. It is usually understood in the former sense ; but Tichonius says, “All these things spiritually happen to the Church in this life.” Bede terminates his account by saying, “The vision of this white-robed company may also be understood of this present time, where we are saved by hope, and that which we see not we through patience wait for.” Berengaud says, “Having come out of tribulation intimates that they are not at present in the world, but in heavenly rest.” But the Greek expression is not “who have come,” but “who are coming from the great tribulation.”⁷ A further question is whether they are martyrs that are here spoken of or not. Aretas and Ecumenius, that they are “martyrs, who took up the Cross of Christ and imitated Him in death—the Lamb that before His shearers was dumb—and thus washed their robes in His blood.” And of their robes being white and not red, Aretas says, “that the shedding of their blood for Christ’s sake hath released them from every stain. For, baptized in their own blood, and white from such a laver, they have ascended to Christ their King.” But not so Bede ; “Their robes,” he says, “washed in Baptism, and overcoming by the Cross, they worship God and the Lamb.” “Not,” says Tichonius, “as some think, only martyrs, but all people in the Church who have washed their robes, not in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb, that is, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.” “Palms,” says Berengaudus, “not only for mar-

⁶ Matt. xix. 28.

⁷ οἱ ἐρχόμενοι.

tyrs, but for all who have overcome the world. Having washed their robes in Baptism, and also by repentance and acts of mercy." The making of robes white with blood might refer to the blood and water of baptism, the water which represents the blood of Christ; which alone cleanses from sin. Or the same might apply to martyrdom, as considered the baptism of blood. In either case it is the promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."⁸

They are "*before the throne*" and with "*the Lamb*:" for "this," as Bede quotes, "is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."⁹ They "*serve day and night*," as in Liturgical ministration, for it is descriptive of the Levitical service;¹ and "*in His Temple*" as that spiritual house where the blood of the Lamb is, and the Spirit dwells. "*They shall hunger no more*," from having the true Bread of Life, which alone satisfies; "*thirst no more*," from the abundant outpouring of the Spirit.² "*The sun shall not burn thee by day*,"³ as the seed on the rocky ground which it withers; "they shall be free," says Œcumenius, "from all temptations." "*Neither any heat*," "for He shall be," says Tichonius, "a shadow from the heat."⁴ "*He that sitteth on the throne shall have His tabernacle over them*," σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς, shall cover them with His wings. Much is said by sacred interpreters in dwelling on expressions so wonderfully touching and beautiful; but this image of the Blessed is like a Divine mirror; it is dimmed or tarnished by human words of comment.

⁸ Isa. i. 18.⁹ John xvii. 3.¹ Acts xxvi. 7.² John vi. 35.³ Ps. cxxi. 6.⁴ Isa. xxv. 4; xlix. 10.

"The vision of peace," secret things of God which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, but which, says St. Paul, "God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit."⁵ And we may observe a distinction between this and the final description of the Blessed (in chap. xxi. 22, 23): here they "serve Him day and night," which seems to intimate that it is still below, amid the alternations of light and darkness and changes of the moon; but it is then said, "there shall be no night there:" they serve God here "in His temple," but there it is said, "I saw no temple therein;" here is a sun, though it harms not; but there expressly, "no need of sun or moon to shine in it." These are the saints who, by the seal and predestination of God, are "to be preserved," to use Mede's expression, "under the ruins of the six Trumpets:" it is a heavenly vision of the redeemed, that we may be prepared for those trials to be witnessed on earth: a vision which, as contemporaneous with them, is to accompany us throughout those trials, that we may have hope. Further, it may be observed, that when this sealed company occurs again (in chap. xiv.), it is together with the Lamb on Mount Sion, the Captain of their salvation, as opposed to Antichrist, who had just been described; but it is not so here, as if to correspond with the armies of Antichrist, which as yet, and especially in the Sixth Trumpet, appear without their chief. For the Apocalypse consists of progressive developments of judgments and trials on earth, and progressive developments of the vision of peace in Heaven: not, as some suppose, repetitions of the same.

⁵ Isa. lxiv. 4: 1 Cor. ii. 9.

SECTION XI

THE SEVENTH SEAL; OR, THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

THE seventh Seal contains the seven Trumpets within it, which appear to be the judgments and sufferings of the Church. The coming in of this seventh Seal appears to have a reference to the seventh day, as different from the six preceding. The seventh day is also that of our Lord's absence and unseen rest in the grave; and therefore this describes the Church militant during His absence; First, its sufferings on the destruction of Jerusalem; secondly, from the Roman persecutions; thirdly, from heresy; fourthly, from Christian defections; fifthly, from the Mahometans; sixthly, from anti-Christian powers throughout the world. After other things contemporaneous with these, the seventh Trumpet introduces the consummation. The seventh Seal may thus be considered the day of the Lord, as described by the Prophet, "The day of the Lord is at hand, as one distress after another shall it come."⁶

The seven Trumpets seem in many respects to have a correspondence with the seven Vials, or the judgments on Antichrist; inasmuch as the same images occur under the same number; which is the more striking from an apparent reference also in the same to the order of the creation in Genesis. In the *first* Trumpet and the *first* Vial "the land" is spoken of, for some mysterious reason, perhaps that in which the *Light* of Christ's Presence is vouchsafed. On the *second* time "the sea" in both, the day of waters: under the *third* in both are "the rivers and fountains," as

⁶ Joel i. 15; LXX. version.

on the *third* day of the week they were separated from the dry land. On the *fourth* in both, "sun, moon, and stars" are the subject, which on the *fourth* day were created. We have winged "locusts" in the *fifth* Trumpet, creations of the *fifth* day; and "horses" and "horsemen" in the *sixth* Trumpet, which were made on that day. Such intimations, however slight, may contribute a clue to right interpretations. At all events, they indicate universal nature as taking part in the judgments of God; combine in a wonderful chain the end and the beginning; are so interwoven with the Old Testament as to imply some hidden harmony; and their leading notes are found so responsive to each other, that without attention to them the Apocalypse is an unknown language.

The reason why it is so important to attend to numbers is on account of some deep Divine mystery, of which in them we see but the developments or returning cycles. This is intimated by the circumstance which lies on the surface, that all is sevenfold. Thus the golden candlestick of the Law has become seven: on Mount Sinai there was one trumpet, but when the seventh Seal is about to fulfil our Lord's expression, "then shall He send forth His Angels with the great sound of a trumpet," the trumpets are seven. "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people."⁷ Again; the seventh out of the seven has a peculiar compass of its own. St. Augustin has observed that of the seventh day at the Creation no evening is specified, as is the case in the preceding days, as if expanding into the Sabbath of eternity. This may serve to illustrate the order and arrangement of the Apocalypse which now ensues. Thus

⁷ Isa. xxx. 26.

it may be noticed that the seventh Seal contains the seven Trumpets, and the seventh Trumpet is unto the end of all things; so therefore must be the seventh Seal, which contains it; so that neither the seventh Seal nor the seventh Trumpet have any evening or termination, but consist of an ever-increasing circle. This unlimited expansion of the seventh day, thus lying under the order and full development of the Apocalypse, is another remarkable instance coincident with those above-mentioned of a secret reference to and harmony with the creation of the world. "The sun and the moon shall be darkened," says the Prophet, "and the stars shall withdraw their shining;" this is the sixth Seal: to which is added, "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem;"⁸ this is the seventh Seal. For six days the cloud covered Mount Sinai, and on the seventh day God spake.⁹ "The sixth Seal," says Bede, "is of the greatest pressures of the Church; the seventh of rest: for on the sixth day the Lord was crucified; on the seventh He rested, waiting the resurrection." The ark of Noah found rest on the seventh month. In the seventh month was the Temple of Solomon dedicated. Seven years was it in building.¹ And then opened with sacrificial feasts and trumpets. Thus in the Seals is the building of the Christian Church, opening in the seventh Seal with the seven Trumpets into the Church universal. For six days the men of war compassed Jericho, but on the seventh day the seven priests bear the Ark with seven trumpets and compass the city seven times; and the wall of the devoted city falls down, and the Ark of God enters.² In like manner the six Seals precede the fall of Jerusalem;

⁸ Joel iii. 15, 16.

⁹ Exod. xxiv. 16.

¹ 1 Kings vi. 38; viii. 2.

² Josh. vi. 3-5.

and then the trumpets sound from Mount Sion, the trumpet-voice is heard throughout the world.

Again; it may be, as successive developments of the like analogy, regulated by some secret harmony of numbers, that the six Trumpets will precede; and in the full consummation of all things at the close, "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God."³

CHAP. VIII. "1 And when He opened the Seventh Seal, there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven Angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven Trumpets."

"*Silence in Heaven.*" It is the day of the Atonement, the priest has gone into the holy place, and "no man in the tabernacle till he come out."⁴ "And the whole multitude of the people" are "praying without at the time of incense."⁵ Again: it is the Sabbatic rest; Christ hath entered through the veil as the seventh day came on; "not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."⁶ The "*half-hour*" silence—the broken space—till the end of the world, while our High Priest is within the veil offering up incense for us; and the seven Trumpets are preparing to sound; and at last, at the end of the half-hour, the High Priest will come forth.⁷ "The number seven," says Aretas, "implies the Sabbatism of this present time. And the silence, the reverence and order of Angels in expectation of our Lord's coming, and knowing not the time. The half-hour merely signifying a short space. The '*silence in Heaven*' implying all creation, angelic powers and those

³ 1 Thess. iv. 16. ⁴ Lev. xvi. 17. ⁵ Luke i. 10.

⁶ Heb. ix. 24.

⁷ Ecclus. l. 5-21.

above the world being stricken with awe at what was about to take place." "The half-hour," says Tichonius, "sets forth the beginning of the eternal rest." Berengandus—the peace of the world at Christ's first coming. To which we may add, His second coming, when men shall say, "peace, and all things are safe." "While all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word leaped down from Heaven."⁸ All speak of it as an awful interval, the dead stillness which precedes the thunder-storm.

"*Seven Angels which stand before God,*" or angelic ministrations in the Christian Church : we had four Angels when the land of Israel was spoken of, but seven in the kingdom of the Spirit. As the priests in the Jewish Temple with the trumpets when the sacrifice was offered.⁹ "The seven Angels," says Tichonius, "represent the Church ; and the seven Trumpets the perfect preaching." The sevenfold power of the Spirit and preaching of the Church universal on the destruction of the Jewish Temple. "It was one trumpet," says Aretas, "on Mount Sinai, because one nation only was visited ; but seven trumpets, as to the whole world, in the visitation of the Judge. These things will characterize the end and the Judge's presence, as those fearful sights on Mount Sinai prepared the way for the appearing of God." Again ; the number seven is of judgment as well as of mercy in the seven Trumpets, as in the fall of Jericho ; seven were the years of famine in Egypt as well as the seven of plenty ; seven nations to be cast out of Canaan before Israel can enter into that rest ; hence, also, seven evil spirits, seven heads of the red dragon : "seven abominations" as well as the

⁸ Wisdom xviii. 15. See *The Passion*, pp. 33–38.

⁹ 2 Chron. xxix. 25–28.

seven graces of the Spirit. The progress of the Church in the world is clearly denoted by the consecrated trumpets which accompanied the movements of the camp in the wilderness. It was especially "for an ordinance for ever."¹ The trumpets' sound is of the new moon ; the new year ; the jubilee ; it is the calling of sacred assemblies ; it is of "the Lord mighty in battle," says Aretas. It is of the Anointed King coming in power ; they "blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is King."² It is of the entering in of the Ark ; it is of the Presence of God ; it is of the Law on Mount Sinai ; of Jesus, the son of Nun, entering with his people into the promised rest ; of the fall of Jericho ; of the fall of Jerusalem ; it is of the Lord's Day, the Day of Judgment. That the trumpet had a deep spiritual meaning is evident throughout the Law from its first appointment, and from many instances of the after mention of it, especially in such expressions as the Lord God shall blow the trumpet."³

"³ And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the Saints, ascended up before God out of the Angel's hand. ⁵ And the Angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth : and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

The incense is offered "*on the golden altar*" within, but is kindled from the brazen altar of sacrifice without ;⁴ prayers entering the holy place, but kindled by the sacrifice of Christ who died without. Aretas explains it "that the whole scene is by things material and visible colours, by

¹ See Num. x. 1-10.

² 2 Kings ix. 13.

³ Zech. ix. 14.

⁴ Exod. xl. 5, 6.

the incense, altar, and the like, to represent the unseen and spiritual. The altar is of gold, as of that which is most noble and desired among men, to intimate in mystery the value which such prayers have with God; and offered up by ministering Angels—while that incense, of itself sweet, is rendered more so as being presented by the Angel; inasmuch as pre-eminently offered by Him to whom as Man is given to be the Lord of Angels. The offering of incense itself indicates how acceptable our prayers are to God; whence David says, that his “prayers may be set forth in the sight of God as incense.”⁵ That the object of their prayers was the hastening of God’s kingdom. It is *another Angel*—one in addition to the seven, *i.e.* the eighth, and, as such, must represent Christ Himself, the First and the Last, the First-begotten from the dead. “It is,” says Tichonius, “the Lord Jesus Christ.” Or rather, perhaps, “the Angel of His Presence,” as before the Angel coming from the East represented His Gospel, and as the Angel in the Seven Epistles is the Bishop of the Church and the Church itself, so here as officiating in His temple, His whole “priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”⁶ Aretas, Cornelius à Lapide, and others, take “*the altar*” of incense to represent the Humanity of Christ. Tichonius says of “*the censer*,” “the Holy Body of the Lord, from which God hath received ‘a sweet savour’ and become propitious to the world; for He ‘hath given Himself for us an offering to God,’ ‘for a sweet-smelling savour.’” “*He took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar;*” “that is,” adds Tichonius, “Jesus took a body, which is the Church, and to execute His Father’s will He filled it with the fire of the Holy Spirit.” “By means of that offering of Himself,” says

⁵ Ps. cxli. 2.⁶ 1 Peter ii. 5.

Bede, "of a sweet-smelling savour, the compunction of heart in the Saints becomes acceptable to God, kindling from the fire within." "From the smoke," says Aretas, "of this troublous and noisome life igniting by the flame of love." And "*the incense*" from the altar, and the Angel's hand "*arises before God*," even before the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies, for the veil is rent in twain. And of the same altar-fire which kindles the incense before God, the Angel "*casts on the earth*." "That Divine fire," says Aretas, "like as appeared to Ezekiel from the hand of the Cherubim, taken from the altar and scattered over Jerusalem."⁷ That altar coal in Ezekiel was indeed of judgment, but that in the vision of Isaiah was of mercy and cleansing;⁸ propitiatory for the good, while judicial on the impenitent.

The High Priest is offering up the incense; while the Priests below prepare to blow with the trumpets; and the people are without in silent prayer; and their prayers with the incense arise to God; and their sighs and prayers become judgments on the wicked; and the coal from the altar of incense brings upon earth thunder-voices and lightnings. Thus the prayers and sufferings of His saints are the moving causes of God's Providences: thus by Elijah's prayer was there no rain; from the cry of suffering Israel came the plagues upon Egypt; thus the blood of martyrs, with that of righteous Abel, arises before God and speaks from the ground. Or, rather, that Blood which speaks better things than that of Abel; for this must certainly be the Divine fire sent on the earth, of which our Lord said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"⁹ Thus in the Psalms the Divine Presence is set forth by kindling "coals of fire." The fire of God

⁷ Ezek. x. 2.⁸ Isa. vi. 7.⁹ Luke xii. 49.

amidst human passions and corruptions giving rise to divisions, commotions, judgments ; or the fire of God found at the same time in spiritual impulses and enlightenings. From the altar of incense it goes forth, as our Lord's Church is sent forth at His people's prayers. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest."¹

This "*fire from the altar cast on the earth*" proves that it is of the Christian Church itself that the *seven Trumpets* proceed to speak. In short, the going forth of the Law was with the trumpet, and thunders, and the voice exceeding loud ; but the Gospel is with seven trumpets, and lightnings, and thunder voices.

SECTION XII

THE FOUR FIRST TRUMPETS

CHAP. VIII. "6 And the seven Angels which had the seven Trumpets prepared themselves to sound."

There is solemn preparation—the warning God always sends of coming judgment—like tuning of instruments to sound ; perhaps here the interval of forty years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, set forth in the six Seals, the six days encircling of Jericho. Every coming of Christ is with judgment : when His kingdom is near, the axe is at the root of the tree ; when He comes, His fan is in His hand.²

"7 The first *Angel* sounded ; and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth : and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

¹ Matt. ix. 38.

² Matt. iii. 10-12.

The First Trumpet is the fall of the blood-polluted Jerusalem: the connection of "*fire with blood*" immediately turns our attention to the Prophet Joel, where these images occur, and to the declaration of St. Peter of their being fulfilled on the coming of ³ "the great and notable day of the Lord;" at the same time the expression "*hail*" inserted connects it with the plague in Egypt; for the bringing of Israel out of Egypt was typical of the bringing of the Christians out of Jerusalem. The "*hail*," too, is the common prophetic figure of the breaking down of walls of hostile invasion.⁴ And, indeed, fire, blood, and hail combined are expressive of God's visitations in the Old Testament. "*The earth*" is often used for the Holy Land, as "*the sea*" is for the nations. The Christian kingdom is going forth in judgment on cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan;⁵ and not only on the great, but the people also are all in that destruction; "surely the people is grass;"⁶ and that indiscriminate, even the *green*. "I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree."⁷ Yet, at the same time, to the Christian it was the "*fire*" that tried and purified, and the "*blood*" that redeemed; when their own blood and sufferings testified to Christ crucified and the sanctification of His Spirit.

"*The third part*" is the very characteristic of all the six Trumpets, in distinction from the six Seals and the Vials; to ascertain the meaning of this expression would go far towards finding out the peculiar purport of the whole. In the Prophets, the judgments on Israel are limited, while on other "nations a full end" is made; "yet," it is added to Israel, "I will not make a full end

³ Acts ii. 19. ⁴ Job xxxviii. 22, 23. ⁵ Zech. xi. 2.

⁶ Isa. xl. 7.

⁷ Ezek. xx. 47.

of thee, but I will correct thee in measure.”⁸ “*The third part*” which is spoken of throughout these Trumpets may simply signify that these are but partial and corrective judgments, and not as the seven Vials. The judgment which begins first “at the house of God,”⁹ or chastenings and trials of the Church. Nor is any thing said of men blaspheming God, or becoming worse for these sufferings, as under the Vials. For the expression, “*the third part*,” often means only a portion: as, “two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left.”¹ That is, a remnant or measured portion. Or the third part may in a stricter accuracy of mystical sense signify the Church, as the expression occurs in Isaiah; “In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing.”² “And I will bring the third part through the fire . . . they shall call on Me . . . and I will say, It is My people.”³ It may appear a difficulty that these resemble in some degree the plagues of Egypt (as they also correspond with the Vials), and it may seem hard to suppose the plagues, as of Egypt, coming on the Christian Church; for Israel in Egypt was unhurt by the plagues. But we must remember the great difference, that the chosen people were all chosen as such in national distinction from Egypt; but it is not so in the Christian Church, “the same afflictions are accomplished in the brethren that are in the world,”⁴ they are “chastened” that they “should not be condemned with the world.”⁵ This is implied in our Lord’s messages to the Seven Churches; “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Under the Trumpets these visitations may be for good; so much so,

⁸ Jer. xxx. 11; xli. 28.

⁹ 1 Peter iv. 17.

¹ Zech. xiii. 7. ² Isa. xix. 24. ³ Zech. xiii. 9.

⁴ 1 Peter v. 9.

⁵ 1 Cor. xi. 32.

that some interpreters consider them as visions of good. Berengaudus does so. For such are afflictions on one side. Again ; if the six Seals and six Trumpets are of suffering, yet in connection with them must be ever borne in mind the gathering in of the Blessed in the vision of Heaven intervening ; or it may be even as the kingdom of Heaven on earth, during these afflictions having in their hearts the seal of God and the witness of the Spirit, as all the Beatitudes on the Mount are capable of a present fulfilment. For after the six Trumpets of suffering we have again that "vision of peace." For the six are of this world and of labour ; but the seventh, at the close, enters into and sanctifies the whole. The six are of man ; the seventh of God. Thus the history of the Church is always distressing, and to a worldly view perplexing, because it is the account of sins and judgments ; but to the eye of faith the unseen Jerusalem is present at the same time ; it is but the earthly shadow deepening with the light. "I will be to them a little sanctuary."⁶

If some of these plagues came through "evil angels" on Egypt, through an evil angel they came also on Job, but for his probation and good ; the good Angels blow the Trumpets, which, says Ecumenius, speaks of their ministering as sympathizing physicians in those remedial inflictions.

"⁸ And the second Angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea ; and the third part of the sea became blood : ⁹ And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, such as had life, died ; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

As the first Trumpet was of Judea, the "*mountain cast into the sea*" has perhaps a reference to our Lord's memo-

⁶ Ezek. xi. 16.

rable saying,⁷ where the "mountain" to be removed by the prayer of faith is explained as Christ or the Christian Church "cast into the sea" of the nations; and here it is amidst the conflagrations of Jerusalem, with much suffering and martyrdom. The Mountain is, in some sense, Christ Himself in Daniel. St. Augustin not only so interprets that saying in the Gospels—but on the words of the Psalm, "We will not fear though the earth be moved, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea"—he says, "The sea signifies the world, for in comparison of the sea the nation of Judea appeared to be the earth. It was to happen that the earth was to be moved, *i.e.* the Jewish nation itself, and the mountains to be transferred to the sea. For He left the Jewish nation and became among the Gentiles; transferred from the earth to the sea."⁸ And thus it may be observed the Angel of the covenant after this "stands on the earth and the sea" (chap. x. 2-5); intimating that Christ's kingdom is established, embracing both Jew and Gentile. "*And the third part of the sea became blood*" from the heathen persecutions and martyrdoms, which ensued from Christianity coming amongst them, the burning mountain of Israel.

On the other hand, the whole might be supposed capable of another sense; and it might be said that allusion seems here intended to what is said of Babylon, "O destroying mountain, I will roll thee down the rocks, and make thee a burnt mountain."⁹ But Babylon is full of mystery; an earthquake moving a volcanic mountain is an evidence of Divine power which might admit of either sense. If thus taken, it might be that while incense is offered the Roman empire is destroyed, and as a burning ruin falls on Chris-

⁷ See Holy Week, pp. 109, 110.

⁸ In Ps. xlv. 6.

⁹ Jer. li. 25.

tians, so that their Baptism to them becomes a martyrdom; it is of blood, and death, and confiscation of goods—"the ships were destroyed." But some understand the "*ships*" of Churches.

The same images, when occurring in the second Vial, greatly differ in intensity. Indeed, Berengaudus takes it here all in a good sense: that without shedding of blood there is no remission; and of those who die to sin and live to God.

"¹⁰ And the third Angel sounded, and there fell a great star from Heaven, burning as it were a lamp; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. ¹¹ And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

It is "*the star*" of the Apocalypse, the Angel of the Church, falling from Christ's hand or keeping—the corruption of Divine truth. Such was Arianism, which, denying the Son, turned the waters of Baptism into the wormwood of death. For the wood of the Cross can alone sweeten the bitter waters, *i.e.* the doctrine of the Incarnation. Or equally well may we with Bede consider the waters to be the Divine Scriptures. Both alike are agreeable to the vision of holy waters in Ezekiel, by which "every thing shall be healed" "and live."¹ Giving them "wormwood and gall to drink" is a scriptural expression of reprobation and spiritual bitterness.² "*The name of the star is Wormwood;*" the imposition of a name fixes the character. "Call me not Naomi; call me Marah."³ This star may include Arius, Eutyches, Apollonaris, Sabellius, Nestorius. "Heretics," says Bede, "such stars of seduction as the Apostle Jude speaks of, falling from the

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 9.

² Jer. ix. 15.

³ Ruth i. 20.

height of the Church." Berengaudus — of Prophets. Falling from the sky *like a burning lamp* is descriptive of a meteor, which falls as it shines, and only shines in falling. What seemed of Heaven is found to be of earth. The falling star does indeed occur, like the burning mountain, as a prophetic figure of Babylon;⁴ and both are by the Greek expositors, by Tichonius, and others, explained of Satan. It is observable that the star does not occur in the parallel of the third Vial (chap. xvi. 4): no star to alleviate that darkness, even in falling; no star left in that spiritual Heaven.

"¹² And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day should not shine for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

As Death in the fourth Seal followed on famine, so after heresy now ensues infidelity. Christ and His Church and saints are obscured. "We did esteem Him stricken; we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He is despised, and we esteemed Him not." How is "the daughter of Zion" "covered with a cloud!" The people that "saw a great Light," again "walk in darkness." *The sun—the moon—the stars.* A sure indication of approaching woes. These emblems under the sixth Seal betokened the fall of Jerusalem; but now the defection of the Christian Church; yet only partial, in eclipse, not fallen, for they are still in heaven. "*The third part*" is of correction and mercy; perhaps in some allusion to the Trinity; of One—the Son of Man—rejected, but admitting of restoration and pardon. "It is the Church," says Bede, "observed by false brethren." So likewise Tichonius, and that their being

⁴ Isa. xiv. 12.

smitten speaks of men being "given up to their own evils and pleasures."

It was observed in the Epistles and in the Seals, that in the number Seven a distinction is made between its component parts of four and three. The four first Trumpets have in like manner a character of their own, which distinguishes them from the remaining three. Their imagery is of inanimate nature, the Earth, the Sea, the Waters, the heavenly Luminaries. The last three, of "the inhabitants of the earth," and also marked as distinct by the three Woes. And indeed the introduction of the *flying eagle in mid heaven*, which declares the Woes, seems of itself intended to make this separation between the four and the three. Four days of the seven completed the material universe at the beginning; and living creatures followed. In the seven Seals four Horses of judgment first traversed Judea. "Four is of body," says St. Augustin, "three is of spirit; four is of man, three is of God."⁵ "Four," says the same writer, "is of things temporal; and the temporal distribution of the year is varied by four seasons; and in time there appears a kind of fourfold vicissitude. Hence the Gospel on four cardinal points is spread, which is a temporal dispensation."⁶ Thus, this four multiplied by the ten, becomes the forty years of probation; if united with the three it will be the sacred Seven, the Seven, and thence the Seventy, of forgiveness.

"¹³And I beheld, and heard an eagle flying through the midst of Heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe! woe! woe! to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound."

The Eagle, seen on the horizon coming from afar at the scent of prey, the herald of approaching judgments. Aretas

⁵ En. In. Ps. vi.

⁶ Serm. cclii. 10.

explains it—that men being insensible to the former mild corrections, administered by the Angels, and rendered in no way the better; that *the eagle flying in mid heaven* is as a merciful monitor, to cry and make known to them the Divine wrath on the impenitent, from the fear of which they may give heed to their salvation: that the Eagle was the one supporting the throne, as in Ezekiel; and that the triple cry is not only as expressive of lamentation, but of the wrath of the Holy Trinity; and of the sympathy of heavenly beings with us. Indeed, the Eagle may contain in hidden mystery a figure of St John himself, giving warning of these three Woes, which are the great subject of this awful book of wonders. Bede understands the flying Eagle's cry of all eminent teachers in the Church, who warn men of the "perilous times" approaching, of "seducers waxing worse and worse," of men being "lovers of themselves," and the coming on of Antichrist. As also Tichonius,—of the Church, when by continual preaching she warns men of the plagues of the last times; or when a priest in the Church warns of the Day of Judgment. Berengaud,—of the warnings of Christ Himself and His Apostles. Doubtless it is the warning voice which has spoken to us from Heaven of the three last Woes.

SECTION XIII

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

CHAP. IX. "1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fallen from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them

was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only the men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. ⁵ And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. ⁶ And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. ⁷ And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads as it were golden crowns, and their faces as the faces of men. ⁸ And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions. ⁹ And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. ¹⁰ And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months. ¹¹ And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon. ¹² One woe is past; behold, there come two woes more hereafter."

It is the Egyptian plague of *Locusts*; but these Locusts, as they are described in the Prophet Joel, are an hostile invasion of the Assyrian multitudes; and when they now again appear they are not that only, but with those previous characters of innumerable armed bands, they speak also of a spiritual corruption. They arise, not as locusts, but from "*the bottomless pit*;" and that pit is opened by means of "*a star fallen from heaven*;" and they appear first of all not as locusts, but as "*smoke darkening the sun*." For, as the previous trumpet had shown, it was from the deep decay of Christianity that this plague from the bottomless pit arose; nor did it at first assume a definite shape, till the foul vapours of idolatry and infidelity had obscured the Sun of Righteousness. It is expressly "*out of this smoke*" that the "*locusts*," that oriental and Arabian⁷ plague,

⁷ Exod. x. 13.

those "swarming children of the East,"⁸ arose upon the earth. But they are found to be locusts such as the Old Testament knew not of, for they are "*as scorpions*;" not merely as an armed multitude, but leaving behind the insidious poison of the second death—in that after-enduring part of man, the soul,—partaking of the character of that old serpent the devil, and soul-destroyer. The conqueror and the false prophet combined, the monster half-locust, half-scorpion. Not devouring only, but "*they had tails like unto scorpions, and stings in their tails*;" planting after their devastations a sting worse than death, as found in the undying spirit of man; which in vain, when bitten by that serpent, wishes to die; for this scorpion again is no scorpion, but partakes of the undying worm. Nor are they as the locusts of the earth, destroying "grass, green herb, and tree," which they touch not; whereas, of the natural locust, as in that Egyptian plague, it is said, "they consumed every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees, and there remained not any green thing."⁹ Nor, again, are they as those hostile incursions which in the Prophet Joel they represented as destroying the bodies of men, and their temporal habitations; but, as neither locusts nor the armies they symbolize can do, capable of distinguishing between "the righteous and the wicked," "the green and the dry;"¹ the faithful ones who have "*the seal*," or witness "*of God*," are not hurt by these spiritual corruptions. "Scorpions" of which our Lord spoke as "the power of the enemy,"² which by faith in Him His disciples should tread under their feet. Thus clear is it that this plague cannot be merely of devastating armies, nor of any spread of infidelity alone, but must be of both combined,

⁸ Judg. vii. 12.⁹ Exod. x. 15.¹ Ezek. xx. 47.² Luke x. 19.

and that too under many peculiar circumstances, such as attended the progress of the prophet-conqueror of Islam. But what is remarkable in Mahometanism as differing from other forms of infidelity is, that it has not utterly destroyed Christianity, but bound it up in Mahometanism,—a corruption worse than death, such a state as of men seeking to die in vain,—that miserable condition which Job so powerfully describes in mysterious language, which touches on the second death,—“which long for death, but it cometh not:”—“which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave.”³ For “the grave were better than it.”⁴ It is as of life making a league with hell and death.⁵ And yet all this under a special control of Heaven, “*it was commanded them*”—“*it was given unto them*,” for evil spirits and men cannot injure without permission; and so far only as is permitted. There is, moreover, this peculiarity, that this spiritual plague, destroying the soul, yet comes also at the same time in the shape of an armed force, such as Joel described under the locusts: “the appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots.”⁶ So here, “*and the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle.*” But not only this, for it was not by the sword alone that they propagated their deadly faith; it was by the power and authority of the great, therefore these horses are again peculiar, and differ from the war-horse, for they have “*as it were golden crowns on their heads*,” they come with authority and a kingly sway. And well may they be as horses crowned, which so rapidly overran so many kingdoms and made them their own. What more expressive of their course than the “*horse*” and

³ Job iii. 21.⁴ Eccclus. xxviii. 21.⁵ βίος ἀβιώτος· θάνατος ἀθάνατος.⁶ Joel ii. 4, 5.

the "crown"? Nor is this all, for they come with all human influences of corrupt persuasion, and like Antichrist, who hath "the eyes of a man,"⁷ they have "*the countenances of men.*" Then the lust and cruelty so combined in the character of that religion and its followers, is expressed with extraordinary force of description. "*And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*" "the hair of women," the toils of sensuality; and the lion-teeth, the bold impulsive attacks of their rage, as the lion rather than any other beast. And again, their iron sway, their hard-hearted callousness and indifference to all persuasion of a better faith; and their rapid, far-spreading, winged, and armed influence, is all in the marvellous picture. For while the Prophet Joel (chap. i. 6; ii. 4, 5) supplies the images, yet are they forged anew, and assume a new character in the glowing description. "*And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*" So hardened and steeled against conviction with the iron of the soul, and cased in that dead fatalism against the judgments of God; and borne onward with such wonderful and vast rapidity of their conquests, and subjugation of so many kingdoms and nations in the short space of fourscore years. And all this to bring on the lasting poisonous establishment of their faith, for the destined and limited period when they are allowed to prevail. It is next for a second time expressed, that their settling from the wing, or the duration of their "*torment,*" is for "*five months.*" One might have thought that so extensive and deadly a plague were to develope Antichrist itself, but it is not so: this appears from the period of their limitation, and from the name of their king; which

⁷ Dan. vii. 31.

though of deepest evil, and akin to Antichrist, is not the same; for, as if in distinction from the expression, "the locusts have no king,"⁸ these *have a king*, and that king not the dragon, that old serpent, nor the devil, nor Satan, but under a new name, Apollyon; the same as it were yet another, similar yet distinct and different. *Abaddon*, *Apollyon*—the *Destroyer*; from the peculiar character of Mahometanism, and with, we may suppose, some secret reference to the history of that diabolical corruption, professing God only as the Everlasting Preserver. And it is a name in the image itself singularly expressive of this locust-plague, as destroying everything.⁹ Moreover, Antichrist is "from the abyss;" but these, as expressly and thrice repeated, rise not "from the abyss," but from "*a well*," or "*pit of the abyss*," φρέαρ τῆς ἀβύσσου.

Again, this plague has a marked difference from that which succeeds under the next Trumpet, from its partial extent; it is on the unsealed only that their power is. The locusts are a plague confined to certain oriental regions; limited in their vast ravages; hiding the sun, but not over the whole world, only in the countries where they are. Whereas the other, from the number Four of the Angels, indicates universality in its extent; it is the trial which is to come "on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth:"¹ and their forces are of almost infinite number; nor is their leader or king under that sixth Trumpet as yet developed, as it is with the locusts. Not partial only, and temporal, and local, like the locust-devastations of Mahometanism, and overrunning a part only of the Church; but more extensive, and it would seem throughout the whole world, are the Euphratean horse.

Their duration for "*five months*" may possibly have a

⁸ Prov. xxx. 29.

⁹ See Joel ii. 3.

¹ Luke xxi. 35.

reference, as Mede says, to those five summer months during which these locusts exist and expend their ravages, coming forth from their eggs at the rising of the Pleiades and continuing to the beginning of Autumn. Months in computation of time are supposed to be figuratively significant of evil, as the "forty-two months" of the Apocalypse; "Ye observe months;"² they are named from heathen deities; mark periods of travail; "Elizabeth hid herself five months" of travail and mortification. Mede remarks the peculiar circumstance that their duration for "*five months*" is twice mentioned; and of course such a repetition has its Divine purpose: it may, like "the third part" of the other Seals, be expressive of mercy in the short and definite period assigned to them. It is the limited space of the deluge, which was expressly for "an hundred and fifty days,"³ or five months; judicial and corrective, yet remedial, as differing from the final Judgment.

It is well known that the Fathers are wont to explain the number five with reference to the five senses, by means of which the soul holds intercourse with the outer world.⁴ And thus Aretas here speaks of the *five months*: As months are the measures of this world with which the five senses are cognizant; enigmatically intimating that their punishment had a correspondence with this abuse of the senses in sin. And certainly Mahometanism consists in a great debasement of the senses. The mention of this space of time is introduced as saying that their wound is not unto death, but *that they should be tormented five months*,—and "*their power was to hurt men five months*,"—the foretaste of death, the broken period of five months, intimating a period incomplete and something to be fulfilled. Thus Ecumenius, speaking of the *sting* behind,

² Gal. iv. 10. ³ Gen. vii. 24. ⁴ Aug. In. Ps. xlix. 9.

says, "For sin, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth death; which is intimated by the five months' torment it brings on men, both on account of the five senses, and also of the shortness of the time as compared with the future life." In these Greek commentators it is all beautifully described as the effect of sin.

It would be impossible for any human writer to describe the character, rise, and spread of this terrible apostasy in the allegoric language of Eastern poetry with more force of imagery, aptness of delineation, and depth of colouring, as we are now acquainted with it from history, than it has been prophetically depicted under this Trumpet. So powerful and exact is the hieroglyphic, while as usual it is composed of symbols from the Old Testament, and to be deciphered by it. Such is Mahometanism when contemplated in the mirror of Holy Scripture; it arises in a foul "*smoke from the bottomless pit*;" its effect on the soul the undying worm; and itself the work of "*the destroyer*." Early commentators may be said to bear out this interpretation from the meanings they severally apply to the prophetic account: they perceived with Tichonius that it must consist in some great corruption of life and doctrine; or in heresies, with Berengaudus also and Bede; or in the work of evil spirits on the soul, with Aretas and Ecumenius; or in a description of evil spirits themselves, with Andreas of Cæsarea. Of their *crowns* Tichonius says, "That as the twenty-four elders had golden crowns, so these have false semblances of the same, as heresies imitating the Church; and they have behind the stings of heretical doctrine." St. Augustin, interpreting the plagues of Egypt, says, "The locust is wickedness which hurts by the mouth; that is, by the testimony of infidelity" (vol. iv. 1188). But all these ancient writers

could read the symbols but feebly, compared with that exceedingly striking power of interpretation with which history itself on the retrospect has supplied us.

Much has been said to prove that this Locust plague must represent an army of evil spirits let loose from the abyss under their chief Apollyon, as if it were a matter at all questioned; for, of course, in considering it as the Mahometan plague, we imply the agency of evil spirits, but their character can only be known by their effects; and these are seen in the principles and habits of that religious imposture which these locusts describe. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."⁵ The place from whence they come,—that "*deep*"⁶ into which the devils entreated that they might not be sent,—and the name of their Leader, "*the Angel of the bottomless pit*," prove of course that they are evil spirits. Add to which that the very plague itself, of pestilential destroying insects, seems nature's own emblem for those unseen agents of evil, and whose very name is "*Legion*" in possession of one man. Aretas, indeed, says, "Though some consider this Apollyon as an evil spirit, yet it is not so; but as the Angel destroyed the army of Sennacherib, and brought destruction on Sodom, so this Angel is merely so called as bringing destruction." But this opinion is not well—for the effects are spiritual and diabolical pollution. And all Angels, both good and evil, have no other name in Scripture but that of their office, as St. Gregory observes.

A Star falling from Heaven might be as our Lord said; "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven."⁷ And as Isaiah, with reference to Babylon; "How art thou fallen

⁵ Eph. vi. 12. ⁶ ἄβυσσος. Luke viii. 31. ⁷ Luke x. 18.

from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"⁸ For we see but consequences, and know little of those personal spiritual agencies by which they are brought about; so that Divine symbols may in themselves contain great realities, beyond that expressive language by which they speak to us. But it will be sufficient to consider it as intimating defection in the faith giving rise to this apostasy, the Star falling or declension from good; the influences of the presence of evil, like smoke hiding the light of Heaven; the permission to open the pit; these indicate that the locusts, or ravages of infidelity, are not without a previous provocation of God to send His judgments. It is observed by Bishop Horsley that here, as under the third Trumpet, it is not said to be "a star *of* Heaven," but that his fall is *from* thence, as that only of a seeming star there unduly exalted; but perhaps there is no need of this distinction; stars of the Christian Heaven are liable to fall. It is not at all intended that Mahomet was himself a star fallen from Heaven, for this is not in any way implied, but that the smoke of great corruption, ignorance, and idolatry which had hidden the Sun of Righteousness gave rise to a definite form of evil which is seen developed in these locusts, or Mahomet and his followers. The bottomless pit is not said to be opened by a locust. He neither opened the abyss nor caused the darkness. Tichonius says, "That the star here falling to the earth is the body of many stars through sins falling from Heaven, *i.e.* from the Church."⁹

Again; assigning *the key of the abyss* has a very obvious and simple signification, without any interference with its literal acceptation; *viz.* that quenching of Grace given has as its consequence Divine permission to devils to prevail,

⁸ Isa. xiv. 12.

⁹ See p. 142.

as corruption in vegetation always produces insect incursions, or blight, in the way of natural consequence. This "*star falls on the earth*"—not as that before, "*on the rivers.*"¹ The earth has been usually explained as the Holy Land, and it may continue perhaps to signify the Christian Church visible. It falls on the Church—as such only is it the subject of the Trumpets; but yet it touches not the sealed, for it is remarkable that Mahometanism does not infect the Christianity of those Christians that are found in Mahometan countries: on the contrary, it is said that those Christians are the better for that scourge and the persecution it brings. This plague touches not the "*grass nor anything green,*" which is the faithful people, says Berengaudus; "*nor the trees,*" which are doctors of the Church.

There is something very mysterious in the locust-plagues of the Old Testament, as if they were somehow themselves prophetic or bound up in this prophecy; thus in Exodus it is said, "Before them there were no such locusts as they, nor after them shall be such;"² even as these are compounded in form of the locust, the horse, the scorpion, the lion, and something human combined. And in the Prophet Joel,³ which furnishes the basis of this Trumpet, it is marked as replete with allusions to something far beyond the immediate occasion: the trumpet is blown, which of itself connects it with this fifth Angelic Trumpet; and then a supernatural darkness appears; the description throughout abounds with solemn appeals to repentance, and images of the Day of Judgment itself, of which the account follows. And St Peter has adduced a part of it as the great prophecy respecting these last days in the dispensation of the Spirit.⁴

¹ Rev. viii. 10.

² Exod. x. 11.

³ Joel ii. 1, 2, 15-17; iii. 12.

⁴ Acts ii. 16-21.

SECTION XIV

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

CHAP. IX. “¹³ And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar *which is* before God, ¹⁴ Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. ¹⁵ And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for the hour, and the day, and month, and year, for to slay the third part of men. ¹⁶ And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two myriads of myriads: and I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and of brimstone. And the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions: and out of their mouth issueth fire, and smoke, and brimstone. ¹⁸ By these three plagues *were* the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone which issueth out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like unto serpents, having heads, and with them they do hurt.”

This vision seems connected with the completion and fulness of the last times; the last contest between infidelity and faith throughout the world. For it has been already shown that the number *six* is of Antichrist; and “*the four Angels*” indicate the whole world; and the number of the army is as it were infinite; all powers of evil going forth arrayed for the conflict with the good. It seems to have some connection with the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel—that very mysterious prophecy of the latter days, where God calls upon Gog to come forth with his armies against the land of Israel: “I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields.” And again; “And

thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses ; a great company, and a mighty army. And thou shalt come up against My people Israel as a cloud to cover the land ; it shall be in the *latter* days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (chap. xxxviii. 4, 15, 16). This armed muster may, therefore, be the introduction in another form and aspect of what occurs in its fulness near the end of the Apocalypse (chap. xx. 8); "Satan shall be loosed, and go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle : the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." Where the "four quarters of the earth" seem to correspond with "*the four Angels*," and "the number of the sand of the sea" to the "*myriads of myriads*" in this description. But if this be the case, where is the army with which they contend ; or what is called, in the description of Gog and Magog, "the camp of the Saints"? It must be the army of Heaven on white horses afterwards described (chap. xix. 14). This, then, is the account of what is seen on earth in the loosing from the river Euphrates : while St. John says of the latter that he "saw Heaven opened," from whence issued the heavenly forces ; *i.e.* it is spiritually seen in the kingdom of Heaven on earth. And those armies are going forth to the one great conflict there described, that probably of Armageddon (chap. xvi. 16), in "the valley of decision." For there are two armies described in the Apocalypse, and in reading of each of them, we ask, Where is the opposing force ? they imply and require each other.

The expression here of their being prepared *for the*

hour, the day, the month, and the year, may refer to this great appointed conflict; though indeed each hour, each day, each month, and year is, it may be, its destined time. If this be the case, then the gathering of that innumerable army of Gog and Magog by Satan, on his being "loosed out of his prison" (chap. xx. 7), may be connected with what is here expressed of *loosing the four Angels bound at the river Euphrates*; expressions which indicate universality, and the removal of that which lets the appointed hour. For Angels bound at Euphrates may indicate that Babylon is this letting or restraining power. This account is rendered probable by this, that "the Word of God" going forth on the White Horse (chap. vi.) disappears, as it were, from our view, until He appears at last, together with the army of His Saints, on white horses; the interval between His first going forth and His last appearing being contemporaneous with the whole period of His Church. The meeting together of these armies is described: "Their armies are gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army." And the slaughter at that great conflict is "of the flesh of horses and of them that sat on them."¹ These have breastplates and the like, and the Great Conqueror "a sword that goeth out of His mouth." They are, therefore, correlative and corresponding images. Such of old has been the description of the Word of God in His witnesses. "The Lord came from Sinai . . . He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them."²

If the army here loosed from the river Euphrates is not confined to one period of time, but is their going forth through the whole of this interval, allusions in

¹ Rev. xix. 18, 19.

² Deut. xxxiii. 2.

various passages may refer, with more or less degrees of fulness, to different times ; and the full issuing forth may be more especially at the last, when Satan is more signally unbound. For, as St. Augustin says, "he was before seducing the nations, but then he will go forth to open persecution."³ For the whole of this army under another aspect and point of view would be Antichrist ; but as this term is used as opposed to Christ, Babylon to the heavenly Jerusalem, and the like, so this army leads one necessarily to refer in the prophecy to its antagonism, on the white horses seen in Heaven. The different degrees of completion in their destined periods of going forth may be intended by the year, and still more fully by a month, and still more fully by the hour, whatever periods of time these may designate. But St. Augustin's caution in the passage referred to, that we are not to explain the Gog and Magog of any particular nation, or to consider the Holy City against which they are gathered as local, may in some degree be applied to times also, as mystical figures of general periods. This is most suitable to the vastness and sublimity of Holy Scripture. It is evident that this period of the second Woe continues till the middle of the eleventh chapter (ver. 14, 15), and embraces the ensuing description. The powers that restrain are removed in the whole world in this Trumpet ; and it may be that the preparation "for the day, the month, the year," may refer to a period to be hereafter specified under these figures. For these are mysterious designations under which the times of Antichrist are described—as twelve hundred and sixty days, as forty-two months, as three years and a half, and also as "a little season" (chap. xx. 3). The same space of time variously expressed in

³ De Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. xi.

these ways, as being a period altogether unknown—to man, and to Angel, and to the Son of Man in His Church, and therefore not ascertainable.

Tichonius says, "The day, the month, and year are the three years and a half." Bede, in like manner, that "the four Angels are the old enemy with his satellites, who at the end of the world will persecute the Church, but are until that time restrained by the Divine power." Cornelius à Lapide says, "Ribera supposes that these are the ten kings of Antichrist which will destroy Babylon. Whence some infer that this numerous army will not be at once, but successively ; for battles to endure all the years of these kings. It seems more probable that this is the army about to prepare the way for Antichrist ; and is that of Antichrist when he is already beginning and gaining strength. And, therefore, next after this is the sealed book which treats of Antichrist."

Some consider the fifth and sixth Trumpets both to refer to armed invasions, the Saracenic and Turkish, from Arabia and the Euphrates. But they are very different in character—locusts and horsemen ; and in their origin—as one from the bottomless pit, the other from the river of Babylon ; and the four of the latter strongly implies universality. As horses intimate the civil—national—popular bearings of Christianity and of the world, so Christ, being on the White Horse and followed by His Saints on white horses, requires a corresponding figure in what is more directly of the powers of Antichrist, as horsemen and horses. Add to which that the fifth Trumpet is expressly limited in its duration and comes to an end ; but no termination is intimated of this array under the sixth Trumpet, but at the end of the description it is emphatically stated that there is no repentance. Moreover, this representation must be

homogeneous with the other figurative scenes under the Trumpets ; it cannot, therefore, be armed cavalry, but must also be allegorical. Agreeable with this are the best interpretations ; as, for instance, Tichonius, of the “*tails*” and “*heads*,” that they are the means by which the devil harms, as evil commands and sacrilegious kings and evil precepts of sacrilegious priests. And Bede speaks of this sixth Angel as the preaching of the last contest, which will lay open the frauds of Antichrist. And St. Jerome on the army of Gog in Ezekiel says, “who imitate the armour of an Apostle, and boast themselves to have the breastplate of righteousness, a multitude which is very great.”⁴ They are, in short, those spiritual forces which the Apostle describes, and against which he tells us to “take the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day ;”⁵ *i.e.* preparing for that day of trial to which these horsemen are tending.

While “wars and rumours of wars” prevail in the world, and under the excitement of armed multitudes contending in battles on which the fate of empires depends, we are reminded in this awful Book that there is another warfare—other conflicts during this—all the while going on, compared with which the armies of the world are of no moment ; the souls of men, their never-dying spirits, contending and contended for—the issue uncertain, the contest unceasing—“against principalities and powers,” of which, indeed, these outward fightings in the world are in fact but faint semblances ; and their varied characteristics are pressed into this Book that their naturally absorbing influence may be made account of, to teach us of what is more important in its issues, more stirring in its course. Hence the picturesque and intense vividness of the imagery.

⁴ On Ezek. xxxviii.

⁵ Eph. vi. 13.

"The sixth Angel sounded." The sixth seems to imply the fulness of things temporal formed in six days. At the sixth day and the sixth hour was our Redemption; and the full consummation of woe; and the sun darkened and the veil rent. And in the sixth Seal was the sun darkened at the fall of Jerusalem. In the sixth Seal are the "four Angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding the four winds;" and here, in evident reference to the same, there is the *voice from the four corners of the altar* and *four Angels bound at Euphrates*. And again; in the sixth Vial there is the "river Euphrates" which held them "dried up;" and the gathering together of armies to Armageddon (chap. xvi. 16). Far be it from us to imagine these coincidences like the trivial waymarks of human composition; they are incidental indications of deep Divine mysteries; the degrees of consummation like widening expansions; circling eddies seen on the surface when the depths are moved by Him whose footsteps are in the great waters.

"The golden altar" here mentioned indicates that the temple at Jerusalem is still the scene; but as that was done away with, and all things were made according to the "pattern showed in the mount,"⁶ it expresses the secret presence of God in His Church. "The altar of incense four-square indicates," says Aretas, "the four quarters of the world, from which incense of prayers and a pure offering are made to God according to the Prophet.⁷ And 'the four horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord'⁸ being touched with blood, indicated that by the Blood of Christ alone such prayers were pleasing to God." "The altar before God," says Tichonius, "must be understood of the Church, which is purified like gold in

⁶ Exod. xxv. 40.

⁷ Mal. i. 11.

⁸ Lev. iv. 7.

the time of the last persecution." Berengaudus, in like manner, that "the golden altar is the Church; and its four horns set forth the four Evangelists. From the four corners of the altar is one voice; because the faith is one—one doctrine, which the four Gospels teach." From this secret sanctuary of God's Presence in the Christian Church goes forth His voice to the Angel, indicating that all events and providences are His own mysterious guidance of His Church. Even the very altar seems to find a voice: it is like Christ Himself declaring "Woe" on the places where He preached in vain. For "*the four horns of the altar*" seems to imply the Church universal crying for judgment. Before the sixth Seal "the souls under the altar;"—here the altar itself cries out. This voice, coming from the midst of the horns of the altar, gives of itself an expressive and peculiar character to this Trumpet.

It is questioned whether these "*four Angels*" that are loosed are good or evil angels. Some say good, and mention the names, as Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael; which would well express "Who is as God?" His Strength, Light, and Healing; like "the four winds,"⁹ as it were of the Spirit, in the conduct of His Church, kept in holy waiting for the fulness of time, as "the souls under the altar." On the other hand, their being "*bound*" and under "*Euphrates*" seems like evil. "He sent evil angels among them" is said of God's judgments on Egypt. We read of angels "in chains of darkness." And the evil Asmodeus, in Tobit, is bound by Raphael "in the utmost parts of Egypt." But it is better to take it as it occurs; we are left uncertain oftentimes whether it be by the instrumentality of good or evil Angels that visitations take place; providences are good or evil as they are used, and as looked on

⁹ Rev. vii. 1; Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

from various aspects. The plague on David was by an Angel. The hosts which go forth are certainly evil—from the *fire* and *brimstone*, so often denoting God's judgments on the wicked, from the "*tails like serpents*," and the place from whence they come. They seem powers connected with the mystic Babylon. "It is at the river Euphrates," says Andreas, "because Antichrist is to spring and go forth from thence." "It is," says Tichonius, "the river Euphrates where Satan and his will are bound; that river of Babylon which is interpreted Confusion, into which Jeremiah cast the book."¹ "They are the evil spirits," says Bede, "which hunger for the death of man at all hours and seasons, which will then be permitted to rage."

It is suggested by Berengaudus that the chains which held them was the command given to the Angels to "hold the four winds."² And that these four Angels were the four empires—the Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman, all now merged in the Roman. (As, indeed, is afterwards shown in the Beast³ combining the four Beasts of Daniel in one.) And that their loosing was for persecutions when the elect were prepared or "sealed in their foreheads." This, indeed, would well agree with the account of their lions' heads in persecutions, and the serpent's tail for the defections thence arising. But the circumstance is probably distinct from the "four Angels" of that Sealing and "the four winds" there bound: except that they both indicate universality of restraint, they both imply a power withholding, and that withholding must be for the sake of the elect; there is a power that now continues to restrain, until the elect are prepared, the incursions of Antichrist from the four winds.⁴

¹ Jer. li. 63.

² Rev. vii. 1.

³ Rev. xiii. 1, 2.

⁴ See page 113.

At all events, no local and temporal fulfilment would interfere with a further and more general one more worthy of the greatness of the Divine Word. And, indeed, the mere number would preclude any "private interpretation:" for it could neither be the early persecutors, with Berengaudus; nor the Roman army, with Dr. Hammond; nor the Turkish, with Mede. "*I heard their number*," says St. John, as he had heard also that of the Redeemed. But that number is put for what is almost without number; "*two myriads of myriads*;" as, "the chariots of God are twenty thousand,"⁵ and "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him,"⁶ that is, infinite numbers.

There are some emphatic repetitions to arrest our attention in this description, which altogether distinguish them from human armies, and probably contain some clue to the character of the vision. One is that of "fire and brimstone." Their "*breastplates are of fire, jacinth, and brimstone*." "*Jacinth*" is the blue flame that goes forth between the "*fire*" and the "*brimstone*," which is immediately afterwards put as "*smoke*," between the fire and brimstone. Jacinth is, in Johnson's Dictionary, "a gem approaching to a flame colour." *The fire, the smoke, and the brimstone* seem different degrees of intensity and progress in evil. It seems meant by St. John simply to refer to the Old Testament, where the judgments of God are expressed by these terms, as "He shall rain upon them snares, fire and brimstone;" thus the Old Testament is here carried on, and applied with reference both to Sodom and Gomorrah, and also bearing on to the final punishment expressed by the same terms; "The cup of His indignation," and "fire and brimstone."⁷ It is very remarkable how this expression here occurs three times in

⁵ Ps. lxxviii. 17. ⁶ Dan. vii. 10. ⁷ Rev. xiv. 10.

two verses, and how the same which seems to compose the *breastplates* of the riders should proceed likewise from *the mouths of the horses*. The leaders are proof against the Word,⁸ cased, as with breastplates, in obduracy of evil from the influences of Satan, *the smoke, the brimstone, and the fire*; and the popular "*mouths*" are breathing out more violently the same. Interpreters, indeed, attribute at once the "brimstone" to this infernal character, but seem to have mistaken the "jacinth." "It is," says Cornelius, "a violet or heavenly colour, that they seem sent of God." So also Berengaudus, as the colour of Heaven or Divinity. We might add, that the Assyrian captains are in Ezekiel "clothed in jacinth."⁹ But such does not appear to be the meaning here; the word "*smoke*" could not be here preserved, in describing *the breastplates*, between the other two, so an equivalent is found to serve as a picture.

Another expression three times repeated in the same manner is "*their mouth*." In connection with which it must be observed, that as this sixth Trumpet has some hidden connection with the sixth Vial, that in the same emphatic manner that these things are here stated they occur again under the sixth Vial, three times distinctly repeated—"out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet" (chap. xvi. 13). In both cases they are "unclean spirits" leading men to battle at Armageddon. The evil heart of unbelief, "from the abundance of which the mouth speaketh." To this may be added, that Anti-christ hath given him "a mouth speaking great things" (chap. xiii. 5). "They stretched forth their mouth unto

⁸ Rev. xix. 13-15.

⁹ ἐνδεδυκότας ὑακίνθινα. Ezek. xxiii. 6; LXX.

the Heaven ; their tongue goeth through the world."¹ It is here said, "*their power is in their mouth.*" This strongly distinguishes this vision from the former ; the mouth of the locusts is not specified. Again ; "*heads*" are spoken of in their serpent "*tails,*" which marks them as distinct from the tails of the scorpion under the previous Trumpet. All here is of "*heads*" and "*mouths*" with and in "*serpent-tails.*" Perhaps intimating intellectual subtleties, democratic doctrines of evil, heads and stings in the tails of the army of Antichrist. The Mahometan plague is not so—but an unenquiring debasing superstition. Stings, but not heads, in the tails. *Heads* and *mouths* imply something different from either the heathen or Mahometan persecutions. They are horses as of swiftness that none can escape ; lions as of fierceness that none can resist ; scorpions as of wounds that none can recover. Or the lion's head as killing the body ; serpent-tails as poisoning the soul ; horse-array as combined powers.

"²⁰ And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood ; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.
²¹ Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

All under the six Trumpets is for correction, not reprobation. It is, as Aretas well applies it, the winnowing of the chaff and gathering of the wheat into the barn. And this vision is but another form of the same account in Daniel ; "Many shall be purified and made white and tried, but the wicked shall do wickedly."² "Whoso is wise shall understand these things . . . but the transgressors shall fall therein."³ The character of their sins

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 9.

² Dan. xii. 10 ; and see Dan. v. 22.

³ Hosea xiv. 9.

in the two last verses is formed of expressions from the Old Testament, implying in some sense heathenism of heart and the not keeping of the Ten Commandments. "The gold, silver, stone, and wood" are specified afterwards in the lamentation over the Harlot Babylon (chap. xviii. 12); these are probably both accounts of the same thing, from the mysterious connection of the Harlot with Antichrist. The Jesuit, Cornelius à Lapide, says, "It is evident that in the end of the world idolatry will rise again, but Antichrist coming afterwards will overturn the same." But "dogs, sorcerers, and idolaters" are shut out of the City of God;⁴ and if "dogs," *sorceries* therefore and *idolatries* also might have a spiritual sense, as figures taken from the law. Perhaps "sorceries" may express that strong delusion of Antichrist of which St. Paul speaks. "Antichrist," says St Cyril, "will abhor idols."⁵ But as the last warning in St. John's own Epistle is, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," it is probable that "idols" has the same sense in both.

These two last verses are highly explanatory of the progress of the vision; for after the chastenings that came it is said that men repented not, which is typified in Pharaoh that he hardened his heart; and this turns the expectation onward to apprehend the coming on of judgment: it is left here that men had "pleasure in unrighteousness," and "received not the love of the truth;" it is given us to infer that worse judgment is coming: it is "as the morning spread upon the mountains;"⁶ it is the issuing of the forces for Armageddon; the "strong delusion"⁷ of approaching Antichrist. They are waiting for their leader; the Mahometans have their "Apollyon," but these have none—as yet seen.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 15. ⁵ Lect. xv. 15. ⁶ Joel ii. 2. ⁷ 2 Thess. ii. 11.

It was on account of the idolatries of the temporal Israel of old the forces of Euphrates were let loose ; and now, in like manner, on account of a Voice from the altar itself, they go forth again in mystery. But Israel of old repented of their idolatry, and were restored ; these do not repent.

PART III

The Book Eaten by St. John; or, Mysteries of the Church

SECTION I

THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT

CHAP. X. “¹ And I saw another mighty angel come down from Heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: ² And having in his hand a little book opened: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his left foot* on the earth. ³ And he cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he cried the seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ And when the seven thunders uttered *their voices* I was about to write, and I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. ⁵ And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his right hand to Heaven, ⁶ And sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, Who created Heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: ⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, and the mystery of God hath been finished, as He hath declared the good tidings to His servants the prophets.”

ALL sad sights are relieved in the Apocalypse by the vision of Christ and of peace. And here St. John pauses before the seventh Trumpet, to retrace deeper mysterious things contemporaneous with this outward course of history. The introduction—the development—the transition

—the gradual manifestation of these visions is exceeding wonderful; like the opening of fresh gates into a most glorious temple. And here the poets of this world might stand and gaze on a scene of beauty and sublimity surpassing every description which artist has imagined; as Christ's garment on the Mount was such "as no fuller on earth," says the Evangelist, "could whiten it;" so of this it must be said that it is such as no poet or painter could have equalled; but to dwell on it in this point of view were to gaze on His shining garment, and forget His awful Presence, and Moses and Elias conversing with Him, and bearing witness to Him.

It is well to compare the description with the other visions of our Lord's Presence in the Apocalypse, and to note the differences. These, when compared with each other, give the distinctive character of the dispensation they accompany; and as, considered separately serve as a centre of the cycle developed in the series of events; for although these are not necessarily successive periods in point of time, they are successive developments in mysteries of doctrine; progressive in the length, breadth, and depth, of the Christian kingdom. The symbolic appearance of our Lord being the light illuminating the whole picture that ensues.

This beautiful vision is the manifestation of the Gospel to the world; and the Book given to St. John, his inauguration into the deeper knowledge of the kingdom. Thus the subjects are advancing into ever-increasing orbits: the first Seal, the single horseman in Judæa; the first Trumpet, the Church going forth from the ruins of Jerusalem; and now the glorious vision of its expansion throughout the world. Our Lord is "*clothed with a cloud*," which is ever the emblem of the Divine Presence; and

"*the rainbow*" is the great token of His covenant of mercy; *His countenance* is "*as the sun*" as ruling in heaven; but "*His feet*" imply a kingdom on earth. Or, if we might be more particular, in the "cloud of witnesses" He comes in His Church; with the covenant of His Sacraments; and the sun is the universality of His sway. The *feet of fire* as that His kingdom is not of this world like the feet of iron and clay; "*as pillars*" because His kingdom shall never be moved, but *pillars of fire* as heavenly. And with the *Book in His hand* He is stationed "*on earth*" and "*sea*," as the first and the second Trumpet described. And in His "*voice*" is the *lion* of Judah; while "*the seven thunders*" that echo the same show that He is God. The standing on the earth and the sea occurs thrice, as if to characterize the vision as representing the universal Church both of the Jews and of the Gentiles; "*His right foot*" on the nations as of acceptance; "*His left*" on Israel, as of rejection; or rather the "*right foot*" of advancement; the "*left*" of previous possession; or the Gospel as extending from the Law. It is He that walked on the sea. The "*Book*" in His hand no longer sealed, but "*open*" as the Gospel of God, says Primasius, now revealed.

This appearance is taken for that of our Lord Himself, by Tichonius, Primasius, Bede, Berengaudus, Aretas, Mede, and others. "The cloud," says Aretas, "intimates a Divine Person, as David speaks of God, saying, 'Clouds and darkness are round about Him.'" "The Lord," says Tichonius, "clothed with His Church or a sacred Body." "The Incarnation," says Bede. Berengaudus connects it with Isaiah, "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt."¹ It is indeed spoken of as

¹ Isa. xix. 1.

an angel, as by Andreas : and it is, of course, by angelic ministry ; but it is the symbolic vision of Christ Himself, here by the angel of the covenant, as before by a Lamb.

Aretas observes that the expression translated "*roareth*," is not properly that of the lion, but the lowing of the ox. It may imply the deep suppressed sound as beginning to utter his voice. He further notices that the article "*the*" attached to "the seven Thunders," seems to indicate something otherwise known ; and that perhaps it may refer to the seven Angels or seven Spirits. It is of course of the dispensation of the Spirit, and His mysteries not made known ; as St. Paul, "caught up" by the Spirit into the third heaven, "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."² And as Moses spoke of "secret things" that belong unto God.³ And as our Lord Himself said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Thus Berengaudus speaks of it as of a certain reserve in disclosing mysteries. Tichonius, that the seven Thunders are the same as the seven Trumpets, which are to be only partially revealed. Possibly it might be that the seven Trumpets disclosed the earthly aspects of those events, and the seven Thunders might be of the Divine secrets connected with them. Or as the seventh Seal contained the seven Trumpets, so the seventh Trumpet was to have contained the seven Thunders, and been written and described by St. John, had it not been for this prohibition ; but instead, the inspired Apostle, more darkly and in mystery, describes the time of Antichrist. It is better to leave it to the awful silence of Scripture. This vision is characterized by "*a voice from heaven*" which here speaks to St. John, and is twice specified as such ; it is not the voice "as of a trum-

² 2 Cor. xii. 4.

³ Deut. xxix. 29.

pet"⁴ heard before (as Mede supposes); nor is it a voice "from the altar," as in the sixth Trumpet; but "*from heaven*," which seems to imply something higher and deeper with respect to the kingdom.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away," says our Lord, "but My words shall not pass away." And this oath of the angel, that "*time shall be no longer*," but that all will be *completed in the seventh Trumpet* now about to sound, may indicate that the six Seals contain the whole period of the Church on earth, the six days of the creation, and that the seventh is the eternal sabbath of God, the consummation; and if so, then all that follows after the sounding of that seventh Trumpet, or after the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse, must be by way of recapitulation, not fresh circumstances, but a traversing over of the same period, unfolding the mysteries contained in that course of time which the inner knowledge of "*the little Book*" gives to understand. Dr. Hammond translates the words "that there shall be no longer delay," as in the Prophet, "it will not tarry."⁵ If it be thus rendered, the meaning would be the same in the place it occupies, as indicating the consummation. But the Greek interpreters understand it in the sublimer sense of our own version, "*that there should be time no longer*;"—"That there will be then," says Aretas, "no evening, no sun to mark the courses of time, or that the sun shall be hidden by a far greater Light, as the stars now are by the day." Ecumenius, that "time will then be no more, inasmuch as it will not be measured by the sun, but life everlasting exceeding the numbering of time." This confirms what has before been said, that the seventh Seal and the seventh Trumpet

⁴ See chap. i. 4, and iv. 1.

⁵ Hab. ii. 3.

are as the seventh day in Genesis, which has no evening. For time shall be no more.

“⁸ And the voice which I heard from Heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth. ⁹ And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it* and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. ¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up. And it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it my belly was bitter. ¹¹ And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

The Evangelist’s going for the book, and asking for the book, differs from Ezekiel, where it is more passively described; but here it indicates man’s co-operation with God, his willingness to receive that which was bitter to the heart within. The introduction of “*the little Book*” at this place, and before the opening of the seventh Trumpet, is essential; inasmuch as the inspired writer proceeds at once, after partaking of that hidden knowledge, to recapitulate the Church’s history, which he describes through the remainder of the Apocalypse; the varied aspects and forms which wickedness assumes, the manifold antagonistic shapes in which Christ and Anti-christ will be seen in their followers. For St. John had gone over the development of the Church as yet mostly as it would be visible to the external eye, but the complicated inner nature of the kingdom he is now given to know—which to the Apostles was not at first revealed, of the Church visible and invisible carrying on their course together. And after being made a partaker, as it were, sacramentally (for the eating has a sacramental allusion) of the mystery and power of this “*little Book*,” he again

retraces the former period. It is, alas! but a "little book," not like the large book of the Church spread abroad in the world, but of a sacred remnant, of the little ones of God, of a narrow way, and confined entrance. St. John, as Ezekiel, is receiving into the inner man the knowledge of the Israel of God; and as with the Prophet of old, though there be written therein, "lamentations, and mourning, and woe," yet it is "*sweet*" to his "*mouth*;" for such must be the words of God, "yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth."⁶ But, "in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."⁷ "Very sweet," says Origen, "is this the book of Scripture when first perceived, but bitter to the conscience within."⁸ "*My belly was bitter*:" this is not mentioned in Ezekiel, for he only says, "It was in my mouth as honey for sweetness;" but he afterwards adds, "The Spirit took me away, and I went in bitterness of my spirit."⁹ This seems implied in St. John, who says, "*As soon as I had eaten, my belly was bitter*." As the prophets of old had to bear the heavy burden of evil on their own Israel, so has St. John to speak to the Church of judgment and woe. The sweetness is God's goodness; the bitterness is man's ingratitude. As Daniel in fainting sickness; as Ezekiel in bitterness of spirit; as Jeremiah in astonishment and much weeping;¹ as St. Paul, "in continual heaviness of heart," had to learn of the falling away of Israel; so St. John looked forward to the future, and the secret knowledge thereof was bitter. Nor is it to be wondered at; for the like has been supposed to be that bitter "cup" of sorrows in the garden of Gethsemane.²

⁶ Ps. cxix. 103.⁷ Eccles. i. 18.⁸ Philoc. cap. v. p. 29.⁹ Ezek. iii. 3-14.¹ Jer. viii. 21.² See The Passion, p. 15-20.

That most bitter of all bitter things, the falling away of God's chosen.

The expression of the angel, that he "must prophesy *again*," may intimate this recapitulation, as opening more fully the judgments of the Church: and "*before many nations*," as not of private interpretation, but universal in its application as the Gospel itself. This was not said till now. For before the sixth Trumpet it was not of universal extent; but of the seven churches of Asia; or of the earlier stages of the Church; of Judaism; of Roman persecution; of Arianism; and Mahometanism; but the sixth Trumpet, by the loosing of "the four angels," embraces all the world, "*peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*"

SECTION II

THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE AND THE FORTY-TWO MONTHS

CHAP. XI. "1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months."

In the sixth Trumpet we found the armies let loose from the Euphrates, on account of a Voice from the altar, as it were the nations proceeding against the holy city for its idolatry. Then was a pause, and after St. John had eaten the little Book, and his eyes were enlightened in the mysterious knowledge of the Church, he finds "*the Holy City*" trodden under foot, as it were, by these Babylonian armies, and two Witnesses there, in the midst of the desecration, to whom, on reference to the Prophet, we find

the motto attached, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."³ This is the same thing which was before represented, seen in deeper insight and knowledge. The Church of God possessed by the world, except by those designated as the two Witnesses. We have now, therefore, the same circumstances over again, in a different form or aspect, for the better understanding of them.

The knowledge of the Church as it came from Heaven was sweet as the angels' song that announced it at Bethlehem ; but sad as the cry of the slain infants, and bitter as the roll of Ezekiel is the history of its reception among men. This is now first shown in the measuring of the temple. It alludes to the measuring of the temple in Ezekiel, when it implied "the pattern" of Divine-appointed worship, and its full restoration after the captivity ;⁴ and again repeated in the Prophet Zechariah, in a short, beautiful chapter. There is also to be in the Apocalypse hereafter the measuring of the city of "the New Jerusalem coming down from God." But this measuring cannot be of the earthly Jerusalem which passes away ; nor yet of the last vision of the Church from Heaven. But is of the Church visible on earth ; and here is the sadness of the vision. For this holy city of Christ's Church on earth is trodden by the unholy ; and even the temple profaned ; the inner court alone is measured, where the Presence of God is and His altar ; where the Priests and Levites alone are admitted, the spiritual priesthood of Christ, "the true worshippers," the circumcised in heart : the secret Church of the redeemed, numbered and known of God, and therefore measured. The measuring Aretas explains as being known to God and His angels ; for "the Lord knoweth

³ Zech. iv. 6.

⁴ See Ezek. xliii. 7-10.

them that are His." It is therefore the Unseen Bride again disclosed, as in the similar pause that ensues after the sixth Seal.

"The sacred city," says Berengaudus, "is the Church which Antichrist and his ministers shall tread under foot, or persecute, for forty-two months, which make the three years and a half." The holy city trodden for forty-two months Aretas speaks of as the Church in the time of Antichrist. And (Ecumenius the same,— "The temple of the Living God, the Church, in which we offer unto God reasonable service; and the outer court the unbelieving nations and synagogue of the Jews, as unworthy to be measured for their impiety. For God knows not the wicked." Again he speaks of it "as either the New Jerusalem, or the Catholic Church in the time of Antichrist, when the faithful will be trodden under foot and persecuted; for the forty-two months are three years and a half." "The faithful few," says Cornelius à Lapide, "of whom the Church will consist in the times of Antichrist; and the outer court of the more weak and lax Christians." Tichonius says, "Those who seem to be of the Church, but are in fact without." Bede, "Mere nominal Christians, who belong not to the altar and communion of the saints, cast out from the Evangelical pattern to be associated with heathens. For the glory of the King's daughter is within."

This profanation of the temple seems to continue till our Lord's last coming, as being the same in the period of its continuance with the reign of Antichrist, whom the Lord will destroy by His coming; and this strongly connects the subject with our Lord's memorable expulsion of the buyers and sellers out of His temple at Jerusalem. Probably this profanation is from similar causes, the "merchandize" dwelt upon so at large in the lament of

Babylon (chap. xviii. 12–23). The action He twice repeated.⁵ What He does twice is a warning that a greater and speedy fulfilment will occur; that “the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”⁶

The “*forty-two months*” here specified is explained, as by Aretas, Berengandus, and others, to be the three years and a half of Antichrist; and this will be evident on a little attention to the subject. For the forty-two months, the 1260 days, and the three years and a half, must mean the same period of time, from the manner in which they occur and mutually explain each other; but why they are thus differently expressed is full of mysterious significance. First we have it here stated that the Holy City is trodden under foot for “forty-two months;” and then we find that the continuance of Antichrist is for “forty-two months.”⁷ But the whole passage evidently refers to Daniel, where we find it twice expressly stated that the power of Antichrist is for three years and a half, or “a time, times, and the dividing of a time.”⁸ And therefore the forty-two months and the three years and a half must mean the same.

It is shown in the like explicit manner that both of these are the same as the 1260 days. It is here stated that the Holy City will be profaned for forty-two months; and it is added in the next verse that the Witnesses will prophesy for 1260 days, meaning this forty-two months of the Church’s desolation. For the Woman in the Wilderness continues for this same period of 1260 days;⁹ and after a short digression, that her flight “from the face of the serpent” is spoken of as for three years and a half, or

⁵ John ii. 14; Matt. xxi. 12.

⁶ Gen. xli. 32.

⁷ Rev. xiii. 5. ⁸ Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7. ⁹ Rev. xii. 6–14.

the duration of Antichrist, "a time, and times, and half a time;" with a studious and self-evident reference to the memorable expression, twice repeated, of Daniel; and marking, by putting the same period also into days, that the "times" in Daniel refer to years.

It is evidently intended by all this that we should consider the time to be limited and appointed of God: "seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."¹ But there are reasons for believing that it is not intended we should ever know "the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power."² And it is remarkable that in no single instance has any modern interpreter succeeded in explaining any period of time in the Apocalypse; from the ten days of Smyrna's persecution, or the five months of the locust-plague, to the thousand years of Christ's reign upon earth. The reason is obvious—they do not perceive that, like everything else in the Apocalypse, numbers are allegorical; and that although it is not for us to know the secrets of God, yet by comparing things spiritual with spiritual they furnish us with an hieroglyphic language which is in the highest degree instructive. There appears, indeed, to be some mysterious reasons for expressing the periods of time in this varied manner of days, months, and years; for the diversity of terms is introduced by St. John with manifest design and purpose. For here in two successive verses he expresses the same duration of time differently—that of evil by months, that of good by days. And, on whatever principle this may be founded, it serves us at once with a clue to the connection or identity of different descriptions. Thus the profaning of the Holy City is for

¹ Job xiv. 5.

² Acts i. 7.

forty-two months, and the continuance of Antichrist is for forty-two months; therefore this is but a different way in which the same thing is set before us: the two symbolic representations will mutually explain each other, as having one and the same subject. In the next sentence the two Witnesses are for 1260 days, and the Woman in the Wilderness is for 1260 days; therefore the two Witnesses and the Woman in the Wilderness are one and the same, or contemporaneous. Again; the three years and a half are definitely given as the period both of the Woman in the Wilderness and also of Antichrist; therefore it is from Antichrist that the Woman is fled, and during his continuance she is in the wilderness.³

Thus months are of evil or of travelling in pain,⁴ and days are of good, and the year and a half is of suffering and persecution; and all three founded in deep analogies of Scripture. The Jewish festivals were regulated by moons or months; the expression of months, of keeping new moons, and the like, is of frequent occurrence in the Law; the moon rules the night of the Law, in distinction from the Sun of Righteousness, which rules the day; and therefore the Holy City trodden under foot and the reign of Antichrist is computed by months. And this apostasy has, moreover, some secret connection with Judaism. But "we are of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness:" and therefore the Christian Witnesses and the Apostolical Bride are numbered by days and by years.

The number forty-two may allude to the forty-two journeys of Israel in the wilderness,⁵ or to the cities of the Levites, as numbered without the six cities of refuge. And forty-two were the children cursed by Elisha, the

³ Conf. xi. 2; xiii. 5. Conf. xi. 3; xii. 6. Conf. xii. 14; Dan. vii. 25.

⁴ Job xxxix. 2.

⁵ Num. xxxiii.

type of the Christian Church, and devoured by wild beasts.⁶ There is, no doubt, some further mystery in the number; the six is of Antichrist and evil, and six numbered with the seven gives forty-two. The three years and a half is twice mentioned in the New Testament—first by the Lord Himself,⁷ and then by St. James (v. 17), as that period wherein there was no rain on Elijah's absence in the wilderness; to whose history an evident reference is made in the account of the two Witnesses, and also in that of the Woman in the Wilderness; thus marking both to be of three years and a half as well as of 1260 days.⁸ It was the period of our Lord's Ministry from His Baptism until His death: His Body, the Church, is filling up the same period of suffering as her Lord, and has the pledge of His presence with her. The same appears to be the half-week spoken of by Daniel. For as the six of Antichrist is a dividing of the Sacred Twelve, so this period of his duration is the half of the Sacred Seven. And afterwards we have the corresponding period of "three days and a half," during which the bodies of the Witnesses lie unburied, which Bede considers an allusion to the same period of desolation; "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."⁸

It may be noticed that in whichever way this period is expressed—by months, years, or days—all intimate a breaking off as it were of time, like the "half-hour space" of silence (chap. viii. 1). And it is an observation of Aretas "that this is owing to our Lord's saying that for the Elect's sake He hath shortened the days; that this expresses abrupt shortness on account of the presence of

⁶ 2 Kings ii. 24. ⁷ Luke iv. 25. ⁸ Dan. ix. 27.

Antichrist being so oppressive to the Saints ; that therefore Christ, the true God, hath shortened those days, the forty-two months or three years and a half, during which the faithful will be trodden under foot and persecuted."

Moreover the time is short, yet seems long. They rise again "after three days and a half" (ver. 9-11), as if their resurrection corresponded with that of Christ's, yet seemed deferred. Forty is the time of trial and suffering, but the two added might indicate the time delayed.

The numbers thus variously yet uniformly expressed seem to indicate, indeed, that the period is definite and exactly predestined with God ; but it is not for us to know "the number, measure, and weight" by which He ordereth all things. St. Augustin, therefore, does not consider times as accurately to be reckoned, but to be thus taken as to the general mystery of numbers.⁹ And Aretas more than once observes that in the reckoning of times Scripture admits not of small and trivial calculations.¹

SECTION III

THE TWO WITNESSES

CHAP. XI. " ³ And I will give *power* unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive-trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if any man willeth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies : and if any man willeth to hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. ⁶ These have power to shut Heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy : and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."

⁹ Civ. Dei, xi. xxx. et passim.

¹ μηδὲν μικρολογεῖσθαι. on ch. viii. 1.

In referring to St. John himself we find it stated as a part of the great mystery of Godliness, "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood.¹ We might, therefore, take these two Witnesses to be the two Sacraments. For "the Spirit" is included in the other two. Indeed, it is said on their revival that "the Spirit of life from God" rekindles them from death. Both Sacraments are as the oil—the anointing, the two olives : both are the Illumination—the two candlesticks. Moreover, it is for dishonouring a Sacrament we have in the New Testament the instance of temporal judgments such as here described ; "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."² They are especially the two Witnesses in which Christ on earth is present in His Church. Others, as Tichonius and Bede, take the two Witnesses to be the two Testaments. Such may be subsidiary interpretations in the way of analogy, but it seems hardly compatible with the exquisite propriety of this Divine Book, in the keeping of its imagery, to consider them here intended.

The ancient tradition is, that these two are Enoch and Elias ; whereas from the description, and from their both appearing in the Transfiguration, we should have thought, if two persons of the Old Testament, they would have been rather Moses and Elias. But Enoch, like Elias, was translated without seeing death, and had prophesied of Christ's coming "with ten thousand of His Saints."³ It is not for us to disturb such a tradition ; it may be admitted, and yet another subordinate interpretation may be true likewise, by which the prophecy may speak to us of all time and place with the all-reaching eye of Scripture. Or such traditions, as of St. Irenæus and others, may be considered

¹ 1 John v. 8. ² 1 Cor. xi. 30. ³ Jude 14.

like Scripture itself, as stating the persons intended, but leaving undecided, as Scripture itself does, in what sense it is to be understood or will be ultimately fulfilled. Thus our Lord declares that "Elias shall indeed first come and restore all things;" but states, that with regard to one fulfilment, he had "already come" in John the Baptist.⁴ And as that coming was not literal, but "in the spirit and power of Elias," the other coming of Elias hereafter may be of the same kind; and not improbable, inasmuch as it is expressed in the same words at the same time. Add to this that before Christ's coming individuals were brought into prominence and singled out as types of Himself; but in the Christian kingdom individuals are merged and lost in "the communion of Saints" and the full expansion of Christ's Body.

Christ is Himself called the Witness; the Holy Ghost, "the faithful Witness;" His Church on earth the "Witness to all nations;" His apostles and faithful ones are called witnesses; so this testimony shall never be withdrawn from the world, there will be to the end a remnant bearing witness. Even among the heathen of old "He left not Himself without witness."⁵ And the Law and the Gospel ever hold up and keep to view the saying, that "by two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Further; we have had the candlestick already for a Church or body of Christians, and the olive-tree is put for the same.⁶ And the number Two, in which they now appear, will be found from analogy rather to confirm this view. For it is remarkable that the candlesticks here mentioned are two, whereas in the Prophet Zechariah it is one only, as prescribed in the Law. And the Church universal is represented by the seven candlesticks. Here

⁴ Matt. xvii. 11, 12. ⁵ Acts xiv. 17. ⁶ Rom. xi. 17.

there are two "*standing before the Lord*," that is, says Aretas, "before Christ's second coming." The number Two speaks the heralding of Divine comings, as signifying restoration and reunion—the reunion of mankind with God; and founded in the deep mystery of the Godhead and Manhood made one in Christ. Therefore "if two shall agree together" He grants their desire; where "two or three" are met there is He in the midst of them:⁷ of Gentile and Jew He forms His Church. He sends the Twelve two by two, and the Seventy two by two; and for His kingly coming to Jerusalem He sends two before Him. And to prepare for the Eucharist He sends two. The Baptist sent two disciples to know of His coming; by two in the Old Testament they spied the promised land. Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Zerubbabel and Joshua, kings and priests heralding the Anointed. Hence the two tables; the love of God and the love of man; the two covenants; the two sacraments; in the mystery of God and Man, "in Himself of twain making one new man." But now, in these instances, two persons are for many—for the Twelve, for the Seventy, for the whole body of the faithful. Two they must be, as two witnesses are needful to establish truth. Add to which that an olive-tree is in itself of many branches; and the candlestick contains seven lamps or many individual lights—a sacred company.

But it may be said that in the instances of Two enumerated there is found some variation or distinction for the most part between the two objects; as between the Godhead and Manhood, the first and second table, the two covenants, the two testaments, and the two sacraments; the Gentile and Jew; between Moses and Aaron; Peter and John; Paul and Barnabas; but that between

⁷ Matt. xviii. 20.

the two candlesticks there is no such difference, the one being but as the other. This is important. And it may be that the candlesticks here being two, instead of the one of the old covenant or the seven of the new, may signify division, as a separation or parting in twain, a division in the Christian Church, which may refer not only to the division between the East and West, but also to the great disruption and disunion of Christendom, being the Christian body, but disunited. The outer garments of Christ divided by the soldiers of the world, while the inner raiment is one and indivisible. The sacred nation rent in twain, as of old, by the just judgment of God.⁸ For the primitive Martyrs, or Witnesses, are the one "man child" (chap. xii. 5), but after the Holy City is profaned they are two.

This observation applies more to the candlesticks than to the olive-trees, as in the former the change is made from Zechariah; for in the prophet there are two olive-trees and one candlestick, and the two olive-trees are distinguished as "one upon the right side, and the other upon the left;" both differing, but in harmony as ministering to the one candlestick—neither out of place, but both required. The kingly and the priestly offices uniting in the Royal Priesthood of Christ. This multiplicity or one in many may be predicted in the Temple of Solomon, where the one is found as ten; and it is expressly said, "the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle."⁹ Moreover, in wonderful fitness of adaptation, the symbol itself intimates that the Witnesses belong to that inner measured sanctuary where the true worshippers are. And their influence is as the gentle unnoted pouring of the oil into the candlesticks, that of a

⁸ Ezek. xxxvii. 22.

⁹ 1 Kings vii. 49.

severe and gracious life; "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit." Nor is the description alien to this; for if "*fire proceeds out of their mouth to kill*," so of our Lord Himself it is said, that "out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword." If it alludes to Moses and Aaron when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were slain,¹ and to the companies of Ahaziah slain by the fire from Heaven at the word of Elijah;² yet this must be taken with our Lord's declaration to the "Sons of Thunder," implying, "Ye are of another spirit."³ Yet the consequences of neglecting His gracious words are no less terrible; for the teaching of the cities of Galilee was by miracles and lessons of mercy, yet neglected they became "Woes,"⁴ bringing down fire from Heaven worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrha. As in the Prophet, "Behold, I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."⁵ Such is the effect of neglecting the warnings of God's witnesses. Or it might be interpreted, also, of their prayers. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem is preceded by the prayers of the Saints under the fifth Seal; and on the opening of the Trumpets the incense, or prayers of Saints, and fire from the altar taken in the censer, precedes the going forth of fire and blood on earth. Yet still all is full of mercy for the repenting; so that Bede's suggestion is not unnatural, that it may be making people better by their prayers, thereby heaping coals of fire on their head.

"⁷ And when they shall be accomplishing their testimony, the Beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead body *shall lie* in the broad-place of the great city, which

¹ Num. xvi.² 2 Kings i. 10.³ Luke ix 55.⁴ Matt. xi. 23, 24.⁵ Jer. v. 14.

spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ And they of the people and of kindreds and tongues and nations see their dead body three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put into a tomb. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth."

"*The Beast out of the abyss*," or Antichrist, is throughout contending with the two Witnesses, for their duration is the same, but a prophetic mark of him is that "*he shall overcome them*." "It was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them."⁶ The very words of Daniel, "He made war with the Saints, and prevailed against them."⁷ Both the *defiling* of the *holy Temple* by the *heathen*, and the *dead bodies* of the Saints left *unburied*, are mentioned together in the Psalm,⁸ which closely connects the two in the order in which they here occur. In all these passages the two Witnesses appear as many Saints.

His coming "*out of the abyss*" Bede speaks of as issuing from his hiding-place in men's hearts. Aretas—as from the sea of this worldly life, or from the dark places of the earth to which he is condemned. Our translation of "*the bottomless pit*" gives the force, as the place of evil spirits.⁹ It will be afterwards found to be the peculiar designation of Antichrist (chap. xvii. 8). And such is the exactness of language in the Apocalypse—in which, as St. Jerome says, "there are as many mysteries as there are words"¹—that where it is previously rendered "*the bottomless pit*" from which the locust-plague springs, it is not the same in the Greek, but a partial designation of it

⁶ Rev. xiii. 7. ⁷ Dan. vii. 21. ⁸ Ps. lxxix. 1-3.

⁹ Luke viii. 31.

¹ Ad Paulin. Ep. l.

“a well of the abyss” (see p. 150). For that plague was partial, this universal.

“*In the broad-place of the great city, i.e.,*” says Tichonius, “in the middle of the Church.” The “*body*” of the two and also “*bodies*” intimates, he says, both the number of the two Testaments, and the one body of the Church. For it may be observed that their dead “*body*” is the expression, and also “*bodies.*” “Their not suffering them to be put into a grave or monument means,” he adds, “they would prevent their being kept in memory.” “*Because they tormented them,*” as the very sight of the good afflicts bad men. “He is grievous unto us even to behold.”² The evil spirits say at Christ’s Presence, “Why hast Thou come to torment us?” “If we take this,” says Berengaudus, “for the earthly Jerusalem which was destroyed we should greatly err; the great city,” he adds, “in the Apocalypse is Babylon.” Babylon is, indeed, called in the Apocalypse “*the great city;*” and so is the “New Jerusalem,” and also the city here spoken of as Jerusalem. “Jerusalem,” says our Lord, “is the city of the Great King.”³ But the local Jerusalem is never called “the great city.” There is something mysterious in the way in which “the city” is mentioned afterwards (ver. 13); it occurs with no addition, as if it were “the city”—neither Babylon, nor Jerusalem, nor Sodom, nor Egypt, but “the city;” that which is in fact neither of these, for it is “the great city.” Perhaps that on the “seven hills.” But there seems reason to doubt whether “*the great city*” and “the city” is the same as Babylon, except where Babylon is expressly named together with it. Thus in this chapter there is no mention of Babylon, but of “the holy city;” the city of the mystic Jerusalem,

² Wisdom ii. 15.

³ Matt. v. 35.

that city which is Christian and yet Antichristian at the same time, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt,⁴ which is here trodden under foot. And again; after the Vials (chap. xvi.) "the great city" becomes divided, and seems different from Babylon there mentioned—"the great city," *i.e.* the same city of which a tenth part here falls. Babylon is always mentioned with some allusion to her fornication, or corrupting the nations, or the cup. Nor, again, is the duration of the mystic Babylon ever mentioned, but that of this city in its defilement is contemporaneous with the Beast and the Witnesses, *i.e.* for the "forty-two months," while Babylon is destroyed before the Beast.

As the Old Testament Prophets speak of Judah, and Israel, and Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Moab, and Tyre, so does the Apocalypse of every shape of the powers of evil in or against the Christian Church; the two Beasts, the great city or Sodom and Egypt, Babylon or the Harlot, the false prophet, the antichristian host, the evil spirits as frogs, and the unclean animals in the ruins of Babylon. In like manner the Church visible appears in a variety of pictures, each taking in a different aspect or phase in her course or character: none to be supposed identical except where there are proofs of their being the same. Connection between "the city" and Babylon there is, but not such as to prove identity in all points and at all times, as coextensive in time and place. For instance, Jerusalem is described as the Harlot in Ezekiel (as in chap. xvi.), where she is also spoken of as "the sister of Sodom" and fornicating with Egypt; it is later in her history that her antitype comes forth as "the Harlot" in Babylon. Again; it is "*the city where their Lord was crucified:*" our

⁴ Isa. i. 10; xxxi. 1.

Lord had said that no Prophet could die out of Jerusalem, but the Apocalyptic Babylon is the place wherein the blood of all the Saints is found (chap. xviii. 24), and therefore can be no other than this same Jerusalem. The Beast, likewise, is connected here with Jerusalem; afterwards with Babylon. Thus Andreas and others say that Anti-christ will reign in Jerusalem. For it appears here to be his city as well as Babylon (see p. 164). The scriptural names which designate its corruptions may allude to different features—Sodom for luxury and “fulness of bread,” Egypt for hardness of heart and spiritual idolatry, Babylon for other reasons afterwards.

It would be difficult for any thoughtful person to maintain that the Christian Church is not now and has not been as worthy of the name of Sodom and Egypt as Israel was in the time of the Prophets; or Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, when our Lord applied to their names such as these; or that it does not “crucify afresh the Lord of life.” And it is very certain from our Lord’s own words, that the cities wherein they have preached who are sent by Him, and there is no repentance, are in a worse state than Sodom and Tyre. If, moreover, in apostolic times there were “many Antichrists,” what must have been the case ever since? Nor does this opinion derogate from Christ’s Presence with His Church; for here is still the inner sanctuary and its worshippers, though the city and the temple be in utter desecration. The Apostolic Bride is in the wilderness; the two Witnesses are also as it were out of sight; for the candlesticks, which represent them, are within the measured inner shrine where the true worshippers are. Seen, yet not seen; “unknown, yet well known.” With regard to God they are worshippers known to Him in His inner shrine; with respect to man, they are the two

sackcloth Witnesses. The Gentiles, *i.e.* worldly men, have possession of the Holy City and the outer courts of the Temple, all but those in the holy place, who are measured, *i.e.* are known of God : the Beast, *i.e.* the infidel principle, is persecuting the faithful few that bear witness against it—and succeeds against them ; but they in dying and after death have power and prevail, and bring many to repentance. It is the Holy City, great and broad as the Christian name, where this takes place. What city can be called “great” so emphatically as the Church visible throughout the world ? And “broad” must be that city which Isaiah called on to lengthen her cords to take in all the Gentiles,⁵ which is called universal, and here described as containing within it of all “people and tribes and tongues and nations ;” which behold in the broad places thereof the unburied dead. They of that city rejoice over the dead ; but it was not that city, though it be as Sodom and Egypt, which slew them, but the Beast. Not Jerusalem, but the Roman governor that put to death the Lord of life ; but Jerusalem rejoiced. This is the account of the Christian Church and the aspect she is to bear ; it has no mark of perfection, of strength, of purity ; in every way sadly defaced, in every time and place through the length and breadth of the Christian world, as if the truth itself were ready to fail, but yet there cease not altogether the two Witnesses in sackcloth, as sighing over her abominations, and belonging to the “Man of Sorrows.” They are “sealed” of God amidst the desolations of Jerusalem, because they “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”⁶

“¹¹ And after the three days and an half a Spirit of life from God entered into them ; and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And I heard a great voice from

⁵ Isa. liv. 2.

⁶ Ezek. ix. 4.

Heaven; saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to Heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them."

Wherever the Witnesses exist, in however contracted or enlarged a sphere, they are persecuted by the Beast unto death: and as in every Christian, and in the Church at large, our Lord's Incarnation and history is mystically fulfilled, so is it with these, the two faithful ones. Our Lord bore witness against the defilements of the temple; these do the same; they bear witness in sadness, as Himself, "rejected of men," "and acquainted with grief." "He shall not strive, nor cry," nor lift His voice "in the streets;" they are gentle as the oil and the light. And when they have finished their testimony in the same space of time as Christ did in His own ministry, *i.e.* in three years and a half, the world shall then overcome them, and slay them as it did Christ Himself. And for three days and an half they shall be dead, and "the world shall rejoice."⁷ They are slain by the Beast, but in the false Jerusalem lie unburied. But *after three days and an half shall the Spirit of life from God enter into them*; and they, like Christ, shall rise again, filling their enemies with fear;⁸ and shall ascend "in the cloud to Heaven;" and their enemies shall behold them there, even as Christ said to His enemies of Himself, "Henceforth shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power."⁹ And great was the earthquake of that new dispensation on Christ's rising and the descent of the Spirit, and a signal repentance, and by confession of sin a glorifying of God. Thus, in that cloud, which received Christ, that "chariot of the Lord," as Andreas here terms it, that symbol of light and mystery combined, which speaks of the Divine comings and goings, are they taken. From the face of

⁷ John xvi. 20. ⁸ Matt. xxviii. 4. ⁹ Matt. xxvi. 64.

the enemy they are "caught up to God and His throne" like the "man child," the Seed of the Woman, afterwards;¹ and like him have power after death; for in them is fulfilled the mysterious promise that "he that overcometh shall sit with Christ on His throne, and shall have power over the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron."²

Without pretending to understand in what way this is ultimately to be fulfilled, we see abundant indications of its continual truth as seen in the world; the faithful Witnesses are persecuted and destroyed; if not in every case slain, yet hated; and as he that hateth his brother is accounted a murderer, so would the world destroy them if it could; and then dishonour their memories, leaving their remains as unholy and unburied; yet afterwards, notwithstanding, their names are in Heaven; they are had in remembrance; as stars in that firmament, they convert many to righteousness. ~~That~~ ^{they} afflicted him are "amazed at the strangeness of his salvation," saying, "We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God!"³ Bede speaks of it as fulfilled in all times, and Tichonius as from the period of our Lord's Passion till His second coming. "This is always taking place," he says, "for as often as the righteous are afflicted, the unrighteous rejoice and make merry." "And the present and future tense are blended," he adds, "in the description, as when our Lord says, 'The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service;'⁴ where both present and future are implied." "If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you." "Nor is it strange," adds Bede, "that the city of the wicked, which crucified

¹ Rev. xii. 5.² Rev. ii. 26, 27: iii. 21; xii. 5.³ Wisdom v. 2-5.⁴ John xvi. 2.

the Lord, will also mock His servants, as all ecclesiastical history relates." These characteristics will be intensely deepened in the times of Antichrist, but not altered; for they are founded on the great doctrine of Christ crucified.

Aretas seems to think that by putting these things in periods of the past, instead of the exact designation of the future accomplishment, the certainty and accuracy of their fulfilment is the more strongly marked. There is a difficulty in the circumstance that the testimony of the Witnesses might appear to be terminated at their deaths, whereas the definite period assigned to them is that of the sacred City being profaned, and the days of Antichrist. Perhaps they may be considered as existing throughout as Witnesses; thus at their deaths they are not buried nor put out of sight, but it is expressly stated that "*for the three days and a half they behold their dead bodies*;" as if, though silenced in death, they continued Witnesses still: and yet more so after their being taken up to Heaven, when it is declared that *their enemies behold them* there and fear and repent. In death they seem to resemble the absence of Elijah, for the three years and a half, while he bore witness in silence, and again returned. All these difficulties are removed when the Witnesses are considered as the faithful of successive times, existing throughout: for thus is it ever fulfilled, some ever prophesying as in sackcloth; some over whose removal by death the world rejoices, as released from their presence for a time; yet raised into the Heaven of God's Church, they compass us about as a "cloud of witnesses." They are made conformable unto His death and the fellowship of His sufferings, that they might attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Their testimony, their death, their resurrection, and ascension, and their being at God's right hand is with

Christ; they bear about the marks of the Lord Jesus; their strength is that as Christ was, even so are they in this world: and thus are they in every place a savour of life and also unto death. They are described as set forth in the restoration of the temple by Zerubbabel; in Moses bringing Israel out of Egypt; in Elijah restoring the Law; but all these are bound up in our Lord's own ministry. It is that resemblance which hallows. They are that sacred remnant which, strengthened by the two Testaments, enlightened by the two candlesticks, bear witness, clothed with the reproach of Christ, while the rebukes of those that rebuked Him fall on them.⁵

"*The Spirit of life from God*" entering into them seems to refer to the raising of the dead bones in Ezekiel, and the expression, "O My people, . . . I will put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live."⁶ And here it may be observed of that type in the Prophet, that it is of Christ in many—the universal resurrection of God's people. The appeal is to the "four winds" from whence that breath of regeneration comes. The four winds intimate universal extent.

It is in all one lesson of hoping against hope; of fearing not them that kill the body; of strength in death; being "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God."⁷

"¹³ And in that same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of Heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

It is a great mistake in Mede to suppose this *fall of the tenth part of the city* to be the same as that described under

⁵ Ps. lxix. 9. ⁶ Ezek. xxxvii. 9-14. ⁷ 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

the fifth Vial, for it is altogether different : under the Vials there is no repentance : this is corrective, and throughout characterised by emblematic expressions of mercy combining with judgment. *A tenth part of the city falls, and seven thousand are slain in the earthquake* : the “tenth” is but a limited part ; and that number, as well as the “seven thousand,” has about it secret intimations of good. “Ten is of the Law and Seven of the Gospel,” says Berengaudus.” “Ten and Seven,” says St. Augustin, “contain all that belong unto the resurrection and the kingdom of Heaven, as fulfilling the Law through the Spirit of grace.”⁸ Or, we might say, Seven is of the Gospel and Ten the aggregate of individuals. Again, “the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.”⁹ “Seven thousand” in Israel had not worshipped Baal. “Seven thousand” sounds of mercy. Seventy years was the period of the captivity, the chastening of Israel for forgiveness. Seventy weeks, or seven times seventy years afterwards was the season of grace and restoration. And the effect here is not as under the Vials of aggravation and blasphemy, nor as might be expected on Babylon ; *the remainder feared and glorified God* ; by fear and confession of sin they glorified God even as Achan,¹ seeing His hand and power. In Egypt, when the firstborn were slain, Pharaoh relented and feared, and said, “‘Go, serve the Lord as ye have said, . . . and bless me also.’” And the Egyptians were urgent, for they said, ‘We be all dead men.’”² To this it may be added that *the second Woe* under which this falls can never be the fulness of woe ; there is correction and there is repentance. Under the third Woe or the seven Vials it is not so. The number Two is of warning.

⁸ In Ps. xlix. 9.

⁹ Lev. xxvii. 32.

¹ Josh. vii. 19.

² Exod. xii. 31.

But attention to the exact numbers themselves furnishes the clue to the whole explanation; a *tenth part* falls, and *seven thousand* are slain; thus ten years before its destruction "*seven thousand*, men of might," were taken from Jerusalem captives to Babylon with Jehoiakin;³ it is of mercy and warning, not of final overthrow. In this reference to the fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament we have the key to this series of prophecy. It is, in fact, the counterpart of the former; the prophetic account of the spiritual Israel being clothed in the history of the national and local. We had at the sound of the sixth Trumpet the armies let loose from the "river Euphrates" (chap. ix. 14); we then had the Holy City defiled by the heathen (chap. xi. 2); we next have an evident allusion to the *seven thousand* and the *tenth part fallen* which gave warning of the great Captivity. All this is the *second woe*, as fulfilled in Jerusalem of old: "And, behold, the third woe cometh quickly;" i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem, and carrying away into Babylon. The Holy City is now "Sodom and Egypt," but it is not yet called Babylon, for she had as yet no intercourse with her idolatries. When she next appears it is as Babylon; for hidden in the Old Testament lies the golden chain of all these prophecies. Clouds and darkness are round about them, but ever and anon a link of that chain is seen.

SECTION IV

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

CHAP. XI: "¹⁵And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall

³ 2 Kings xxiv. 16.

reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God upon their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷ Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give the reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

The seventh Trumpet is introduced after the intimation that "the third Woe cometh quickly." But no further mention of this third Woe occurs in the Apocalypse; and it is uncertain whether it falls under the sixth or seventh Trumpet. But if the seventh Trumpet should be of the final Judgment, as there seems reason to think, this, the third and great Woe, cannot be included in that, unless it signifies the future punishment of the wicked. But it can hardly be this; and if not, must fall under the period of the sixth Trumpet; yet all account of it is there omitted.

There is an awful mystery in this silence respecting the third Woe, and the circumstance of its not being afterwards mentioned or explained in what it consists. This agrees with the usual method observable in Scripture and Providence; an event twice takes place as prophetic and precursory, pointing out to a third completion which is final, full, and indescribable. A vision repeated certifies the coming fulfilment. The days of Noah and the days of Lot wait for the days of the Son of Man. Elias has twice appeared, and is to come a third time. Christ twice cleansed His Temple, and will do it a third time. He wrought two miracles of bread in the wilderness as preparatory to the Eucharist. In all these cases the third is

left in a manner untold and unexplained, but by the event itself.

The third Woe might indeed be considered as afterwards including the six Vials, for "in them," it is said, "is filled up the wrath of God."¹ At all events, if it be in this life, and temporal, it must be that of which our Lord speaks, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world . . . no, nor ever shall be."² This we have found to have had its previous typical fulfilment on the destruction of Jerusalem, when the redeemed also are described as having come out of "*the great tribulation*."³ It must therefore be considered as occurring at the termination of the sixth Trumpet, when it is announced as coming *quickly*, and must have been at hand when the armies of Antichrist inflicted their plagues, and there was no repentance."⁴ This agrees with Cornelius à Lapide, who says, "This seventh Trumpet is put here by anticipation, for the things of Antichrist, Gog and Magog, are before the seventh Trumpet." Others, as Mede and Woodhouse, consider the third Woe to be in the seventh Trumpet. Bede says the same, and that it is implied in the rejoicing of the righteous, and the destroying of "those which destroy the earth." So also Aretas; and that this is the cause of their thanksgiving. But such may still be the case on account of those judgments which had just been fulfilled at the close of the sixth Trumpet, viz., that the seventh opens with the thanksgivings of the righteous; and that those judgments had not been described under the sixth Trumpet, as they are the subject of the succeeding prophecies, which we have supposed to treat of the same period. The seventh Trumpet might,

¹ Rev. xv. 1.

² Matt. xxiv. 21; Rev. iii. 10.

³ Rev. vii. 14.

⁴ Rev. ix. 20.

indeed, in a subordinate sense, contain the whole period of the Christian kingdom, coinciding with the "thousand years" understood in the same sense, and, as such, include all the remainder of the Apocalypse. But the whole arrangement of the Seals and Trumpets seems to cease with this chapter; and it is better to consider the subsequent prophecies as supplemental and independent, without any reference to the previous division. All that follows might be considered as "the Little Book." Under the Seals and Trumpets successive visions are unfolded, delineating the history of Christendom in its progressive courses; in like manner as children are taught by the use of pictures. But after St. John, by eating the Unsealed Book, had become partaker of the deeper knowledge of the Church, as children who cast aside mere figurative representations when they come to the maturer understanding of what they described, he hastens at once to the conclusion of the Trumpets, briefly introducing the seventh; and then proceeds to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom without any further allusion to that previous arrangement.

The opening of this Trumpet is with an announcement of "*voices in heaven*," and the vision of the divine Throne, but characterized with indications of the final Judgment. This was indicated by the oath of the angel "lifting up his hand to heaven," as in Daniel,⁵ that when "the seventh angel shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished;"⁶ and the description is marked throughout by points which distinguish it both from the Throne of God in the fourth chapter, and from other visions of the Blessed. None of them seem final, like this, except that at the end of the twentieth chapter, where like expressions occur; such

⁵ Dan. xii. 7.

⁶ Rev. x. 7.

as *the time of the dead*, which, says Aretas, is the universal resurrection ; and *great and small* standing before God, which, adds the same writer, imply degrees of goodness in the final Judgment. The word *destroy* too seems of final destruction, and different from what is expressed in other visitations of Judgment. "*Thy wrath is come*" occurs likewise in that great type of the last Judgment under the sixth Seal : "the wrath of the Lamb," "the great day of His wrath is come."⁷

Berengaudus affords some very admirable reasons for its occurring in this manner, and indeed of the numerous types of this final judgment being introduced continually throughout. He says : "This short notice of the day of Judgment previous to the description of Antichrist, will, on diligent inspection, be seen to have been done with a definite order and purpose ; for the holy preachers who are to arise in the end of the world, will make it the subject of their preaching that the day of the Lord is close at hand. And since before the persecutions of Antichrist the day of Judgment will be the subject of preaching, John has wished to place the same day of Judgment before he comes to describe the persecutions of Antichrist." Doubtless it is not without a Divine purpose that this His coming is so interwoven throughout, that He comes quickly, that He is all but coming, that He is already come ; and with the most solemn of all oaths, and an appeal to all creation,⁸ that this the consummation is in the seventh Trumpet. There is something similar in the prophet Daniel. In speaking of Antichrist he passes to the Judgment, and from the Judgment again to Antichrist.⁹ It is the universal method of Scripture ever to pause to bring in the great Day ; so earnestly repeated of God, because so disbelieved of men.

⁷ Rev. vi. 16.

⁸ Rev. x. 6.

⁹ Dan. vii. 9-26.

It is but the fulfilment of our Lord's own command to the Apostles that they should preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In this heavenly vision contained in the seventh Trumpet, the four Living Creatures are omitted: this is much to be observed; the reason appears to be, that they bear the throne of God through the world, as conveying His Gospel; but here, where the consummation has come, they are no more introduced. This may afford an additional reason for concluding that this is the termination. For afterwards, in the visions of the fifteenth and of the nineteenth chapters, they occur again, but those do not speak of things having come to an end as this does, but indicate the contrary. Indeed, it is one of the four Living Creatures that delivers the Vials to the Angel.¹ The twenty-four Elders "*sitting*" on their thrones, appears to intimate their work accomplished. Berengaudus takes them for all Christian souls in heaven.

If, indeed, "the thousand years" be considered—not as the whole period of the Church reigning with Christ in "the first resurrection" of baptismal regeneration, but as a distinct period at the end of it, as some suppose the Millennium to be,—then, indeed, the seventh Trumpet might well signify the same, when Christ shall be visibly present in His kingdom without the aid of His written Gospels. But this cannot be spoken of by us, as of a character so spiritual and mysterious as not to be imagined by human thought with safety. Mede even seems to have supposed that the Millennium itself may be the Day of Judgment, "the day of the Lord as a thousand years." But conjecture is dangerous on such a subject.

¹ Rev. xv. 7.

“¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

It seems doubtful whether this verse is to be taken in connection with the foregoing or the succeeding chapter. It must at all events signify that the kingdom and the mystery of Christ is now in some sense fully revealed. “*The ark of the testament*”—the Old Testament laid up therein is made manifest and understood; the Lamb hath been found worthy to open the mystery. The ark which was in the temple of the earthly Jerusalem is seen in the heavenly, the Holy of Holies is open, for the veil is rent by Christ’s death; and revealed are the treasures hid in Christ, in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. “Like the pattern shown in the mount to Moses,” says Andreas, “to raise the understanding to that heavenly vision.” The ark, which sets forth the Incarnation of Christ, where the true mercy-seat is, and the true rod of Aaron, and true manna. “And *lightnings and thunderings*,” as on showing the ark to Moses, warning the unholy not to approach. But now, as in the previous vision of the Throne (chap. iv. 5), there are also “*voices*” with the lightnings and thunderings, many voices for the one voice of Mount Sinai. And St. John, now divinely filled with a deeper knowledge, proceeds to retrace again from the beginning “the mystery of godliness,” and “the mystery of iniquity,” or spiritual wickednesses in high places, the conflict of the old serpent with the seed of the woman—the war in Heaven, and thence Antichrist on earth. It differs from the former as one of our Lord’s parables differs from another; or as one of His parables sets forth in a new light the subjects of His previous teaching, intro-

ducing superhuman relations ; as the choking of the good seed by the great enemy ; or the evil spirit taking possession. It might itself be designated the parable of the Dragon, the two Beasts, and the Lamb. It will be seen that it traverses again the whole space of the Seals and the Trumpets, unfolding a deeper revelation ; and first the mystery of the Divine Birth from on High, in which all Christian life consists, which was not at first made known.

SECTION V

THE SUN-CLOTHED WOMAN AND THE RED DRAGON

CHAP. XII. “¹ And there appeared a great wonder in Heaven ; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. ² And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

“*The woman*” in Heaven “*clothed with the sun*,” given “to rule the day” of the Gospel ; “*and under her feet the moon*,” which had been given “to rule the night” of the Law, marking Jewish festivals and sacrificial assemblies. Clothed “with light like as with a garment,” nay, clothed with the very sun itself, having “put on Christ ;” without, within, and all through, penetrated and endued with the Sun of Righteousness ; “the Power of the Highest,” as the angel Gabriel said, overshadowing, covering, enfolding. “The moon under her feet” beautifully describes what the Law became to the Christian Church ; not a yoke or a bondage, but yet the substratum or foundation ; “Heaven is My throne ; earth is My footstool,” as in subjection, not in dishonour ; so is the legal Israel subject to the Church of Christ and “under her feet.” Thus is it the case in a wonderful manner throughout the Apoca-

lypse—the Jerusalem, the Mount Sion, the twelve tribes by name, the temple and all therein, with its sacred furniture and ministrations, all are fulfilled. It is, as Aretas says, “the Divine service and polity according to the Law.” The Christian Church is never apart from the Old Law of Israel; it is always “under her feet” and supporting her; itself made bright as Moses and Elias on the Mount with the brightness of Christ’s Presence pervading them. For our Lord Himself declares that the Law shall never fail, though heaven and earth pass away; but shall be in every part fulfilled. Thus it is in this Divine Book. But the Twelve—the twelve Patriarchs or twelve Prophets, are not beneath her feet; but they, in the twelve Apostles, have become “*a crown of stars*,” “as the brightness of the firmament,” and “shining for ever and ever.” The twelve of the Law have become the twelve of the Gospel. The precious stones of earth have become stars of Heaven. The expression of the “*crown*” connects the whole passage with that in the prophet Isaiah, where the same is prefigured; of Jerusalem, whose salvation shall “go forth as a lamp that burneth,” it is there added, “Thou shalt be also a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a diadem of royalty in the hand of thy God.”¹ By a comparison of the two prophecies it will be seen how infinitely this arises into a Divine sublimity. The “*crown*” is perhaps the wreath of victory, *στέφανος*; it may imply both conquest and royalty, as the “many crowns,” *διαδήματα*, afterwards on the head of Him that sat on the White horse (chap. xix. 12).

“The “*moon*” is thus explained by ancient commentators of the Law and of Israel; but St. Augustin has

¹ Isa. lxii. 1–3, LXX. version.

another application, that "the City of God, clothed with the Sun of Righteousness, is treading under foot the mortality of this increasing and waning flesh."² Bede also has the same; and adds, "that the Church, as partly in Heaven, enjoys Christ as her sun, and partly as in the body is absent from the Lord." This is a poetical and beautiful conception, and not at all opposed to the former, but rather harmonizing and coinciding with it; as the Law and the Israel of old, inasmuch as they were of a temporal and transitory dispensation, often represent the passing things of the world. St. Gregory adopts the like: "For in the sun," he says, "is the illumination of truth; but by the moon, with her monthly waning and increase, is understood the changeableness of this temporal condition. For the holy Church, because she is protected by the splendour of light from above, is clothed as it were by the sun; but because she looks down on all things temporal, she treads the moon under her feet."³

Though clothed with Christ she *travaileth in pain*. For "through much tribulation" is the entrance into the kingdom; as partaking of Eve, she bringeth forth in sorrow; for not only the whole creation travaileth together in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; but we "ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit."⁴ "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow,"⁵ is spoken by our Lord of His Church in these her early trials.

³ And there appeared another wonder in Heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail draws the third part of the stars of Heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to

² In Ps. cxlii. 3. vol. ii. 2264. ³ In Job, lib. xxxiv. num. 25.

⁴ Rom. viii. 19-23.

⁵ John xvi. 21.

devour her child as soon as it was born. ⁵ And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God and to His throne."

It is full of Divine instruction that the description here of the Church giving birth to her "first-born," the martyr saints of the primitive Church—the male child of stern masculine piety, is such as to apply to the birth of our Lord Himself. It is the same in the prophet, when he describes Zion's marvellous birth of a "man-child,"⁶ for he immediately at the same time hastens to alter the expression of the "man-child" to the plural; "as soon as Zion travailed," he adds, "she brought forth her children." In like manner in other places, "the daughter of Zion" is travelling in pain with the Church of the first-born.⁷ And here some early writers apply it to our Lord Himself, as Victorinus and St. Gregory;⁸ others, as St. Augustin, to the Church; or, as Aretas, mention at the same time both opinions; for some, he says, explain it of the Blessed Virgin; others, as Methodius of Patæra, of the Church. For doubtless both are intended. So wonderfully are the type and antitype interwoven together, that even those who consider the man-child to represent our Lord Himself and His Incarnation, yet consider the Woman clothed with the sun to be the Church, as does St. Gregory. And St. Augustin speaks of the Church,—that "city of God" of which "glorious things are spoken," as intended by the Woman clothed with the sun, while the man-child is Christ born in His members.⁹ And all this is surely not without a deep and Divine purpose and mystery. For this resemblance, this analogy, this identity with Christ is the strength of the Church of the first-born, whose names are

⁶ Isa. lxvi. 7, 8.

⁷ Micah iv. 10; v. 2, 3.

⁸ In Job, lib. xxxiv. 12.

⁹ In Ps. cxlii. 3.

written in Heaven. "He gave to them power to become the sons of God;" inasmuch as they are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."¹

Moreover, our Lord's birth of the Virgin, as the archetype of all, has here an especial force, as introducing the mystery of Antichrist, whom Satan would persuade men to receive instead of the Christ. For our Lord's Incarnation contains all—the beginning and the end—and this the account of His marvellous generation unites both in one in a mysterious manner. This the analogy and connection with Him was seen to be marked through the history of the two Witnesses.² For His birth, His death, resurrection, and ascension, and sitting in heavenly places, is always spoken of as having a fulfilment in His members. But here it is much to be noticed that the account of the "*great red Dragon*," or Satan, which is given with it in precisely the same manner, has the singular characteristics of the Beast, or Antichrist; they are both "*red*," as with blood; they have both the "*ten horns*" and the "*seven heads*;" so that, as in the former description, it might be questioned, and has been, whether our Lord Himself or His Church is intended; so, in like manner, in the latter it has been matter of inquiry whether it be Satan or Antichrist. So much so, that the two, viz., the Dragon and the Beast, have been by some commentators confounded together; and explained of one and the same object. Aretas thus takes it, "that beginning at the great mystery of the Incarnation, the birth of a Virgin, as the sign of the true Christ, as distinguished from the counterfeit which Satan would establish in Antichrist; so he begins in like manner with the fall of Satan from Heaven." Further, it may be

¹ John i. 13.

² See pp. 195–198.

observed that as our Lord's birth of a Virgin sets forth the regeneration of His children from on High, being in Him, by a Divine and marvellous birth, made sons of God after His likeness : so this resemblance of the serpent to Anti-christ may be intended to denote some counterpart in the wicked, as our Lord Himself testifies of the unbelieving Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."³

With regard to this evil portent being seen by St. John "*in Heaven*," it may signify that by spiritual insight and divinely-inspired knowledge of mysteries these things are discerned. Or it may be intended to express the history of Christ's kingdom as seen in its origin, in "spiritual wickedness in high places."

It is the "*red dragon*," for he was "a murderer from the beginning;" and he has "*seven heads*" from the idolatrous worship of the world; and "*ten horns*" from the kingdoms and nations; and he has on his heads "*seven crowns*," as it is by means of those idolatries he sways nations. And thus the Dragon differs from the Beast in the next chapter; for the Beast has the crowns on the ten horns; but the Dragon has the crowns on the seven heads. One has ten crowns; the other has seven. The ten is of kingdoms; and the seven is of religion, or what is spiritual. The ten-horned Beast is of the world, not of religion. This description of Satan may be intended to contain the two Beasts afterwards described, as implying that it is through the two Beasts combined, or infidelity together with idolatry and spiritual deceits, that Satan prevails.

The horn, says Aretas, is emblematic of power and glory; and the "ten horns," the falling away, through Satan, from the ten commandments of God; and the

³ John viii. 44.

“seven heads” are opposed to the sevenfold operations of the Spirit. Thus in the Gospel, with seven other evil spirits, he possesses the house of Israel. And Solomon speaks of the “seven abominations” of the heart.⁴ The seven idolatrous nations⁵ of Canaan warring against Israel are as the seven heads with ten horns; whereas the Lamb has “seven horns,”⁶ that is, His power is spiritual; not seven heads, but one only. Berengaudus says, as the seven horns of the Lamb are the elect, so the seven heads of the Dragon are the reprobate. But Tichonius speaks of the seven heads as kings, and the ten horns as kingdoms.

It is not clear what is intended by *his tail drawing down, and casting to the earth the third part of the stars of heaven*; it seems as if carrying on the illusion to Antichrist, who will “cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground.”⁷ But as it is here mentioned before his persecuting the “male child,” it must contain at the same time some earlier reference, perhaps to the angels whom he drew down with himself to perdition, or to the chief persons of Israel whom he led to reject Christ when He came. For in other passages they are designated as the stars falling. The stars we have also had in the language of the Apocalypse for the Angels of Churches whom Antichrist may seduce. Aretas (on Rev. viii. 5) has the remarkable saying, that if the Bishops of his time are likened to an angel, it must be to an angel of Satan.

Whatever the *third part* may signify, it seems to have the same purport here as under the Trumpets; they represent the continuous history of the Church, and throughout a “third part” are affected by the judgments; as here a *third part of the stars of heaven*. Aretas in the

⁴ Prov. xxvi. 25.

⁵ Deut. vii. 1.

⁶ Rev. v. 6.

⁷ Dan. viii. 10.

third part sees an indication of falling away with respect to one Person of the Trinity, as in Arius and Macedonius. The same writer says, that it may be the fall of the apostate angels, which, with his envy at last, or by his tail, he cast from heaven. . . . Or it may be, that after the head of Satan was bruised by our Lord and His disciples, to whom He said, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy;"⁸ that he again at last exerts his power in Antichrist, the last movement as it were of his tail, by which he casts down the unstable from their place in heaven. Berengaudus likewise makes the tail of the Dragon to be Antichrist; Hammond,—that the tail is the corrupting, poisonous power, not open and manifest as the heads.

His waiting to devour the *Man-child* took place at our Lord's birth; and at all times as the Church travails in birth with Christ, he waits to devour the new birth; as was shown in Pharaoh destroying "the men children," and Herod the male children in Bethlehem. And the male children by the law were sanctified to God. "Pharaoh king of Egypt" is called "the great dragon;"⁹ and the dragon "is a king over all the children of pride."¹ Thus Tichonius says, "The Church through all time is daily bringing forth; always in pain, bringing forth Christ through His members; and the dragon is always seeking to devour the same when born." And so likewise Hippolytus. Aretas explains the *Man-child* being caught up to God and His throne, of our Lord's escape, by the Divine interference, into Egypt, or the salvation of God. It may be more than this; for Egypt is emblematic of the world, in which Christ is about to establish His throne and kingdom of heaven by escaping from Israel and Herod. Thus

⁸ Luke x. 19.⁹ Ezek. xxix. 3.¹ Job xli. 34.

was He saved from death, and set on the throne of God *to rule the nations*; as Moses was saved and placed in Pharaoh's palace. Again, the little ones at Bethlehem, who were slain by the Dragon, were "caught up" by that martyrdom unto "the throne" of God; and thus represented the little ones of Christ, the martyrs, which are here the historical interpretation of the male Child. They are caught up to live with God, safe from the power of the Dragon. They are caught up, it is not said to Heaven, for that is the Church of God on earth, but to be with God; to be at His right hand; to be as Christ. They are partakers with Christ of His throne,² and, as such, rule the nations with their influence, as the two Witnesses in the last chapter. For the martyrs are the strength of the Church; in fellowship of Christ's sufferings made heirs of His kingdom. He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ."³

"⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed here there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

As Israel fled out of Egypt, the place of the dragon, into the wilderness; as Elijah into the wilderness from the face of Ahab: as in the days of Antiochus the faithful fled from Jerusalem into the wilderness;⁴ as our Lord gave the same charge to them of the last days to flee to the mountains, *i.e.*, the wilderness; as Christ Himself spent the forty days typical of suffering in the wilderness; and to the mountains or wilderness He Himself retired to pray; as on two occasions He fed the people in the wilderness,—that feeding of God here alluded to, like the manna in the wilderness. Hence it is often spoken of in the

² Rev. ii. 27.

³ Eph. ii. 6.

⁴ Mac. ii. 29.

Prophets as the place of blessing, the rose in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, a table of God prepared in the wilderness. "I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."⁵ "And now she is planted in the wilderness in a dry and thirsty ground."⁶ "It is the wilderness," says Berengaudus, "in which the good Shepherd seeks the lost sheep."

Again, it is not only to the wilderness, but where "*she hath a place prepared of God*;" and, as it is afterwards expressed with the like emphatic and precise designation, "into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished" (ver. 14); not an indefinite flight and retreat, but to a certain place of refuge which God hath prepared, and which she hath as her own. It was to a certain mountain there appointed of God that Israel was called;⁷ and Elijah to a place where God had appointed to sustain him;⁸ or to Horeb, the mount of God.⁹ Any religion might flee to the wilderness; but to her own place, prepared for her of God, and to be there nourished of God, this is peculiar to the Christian Church; for in the wilderness the Harlot is afterwards found,¹ but not in the "place prepared of God." The kingdom of heaven at last is that "prepared" of the Father "from the foundation of the world." It is evident that the place appointed her of God must be the bosom of His Church, and the food by which He sustains her the Body and Blood of Christ, the spiritual Bread in the wilderness. "By the place," says Berengaudus, "the Church is designated; but by 'the time, and times, and half a time' (ver. 14), the period is designated from our Lord's Passion to the end of the world. In this space of time,

⁵ Hosea ii. 14.

⁶ Ezek. xix. 13.

⁷ Exod. iii. 12.

⁸ 1 Kings xvii. 3-9.

⁹ 1 Kings xix. 8.

¹ Rev. xvii. 3.

the souls of the saints, *i.e.* the Church, are fed with the feasts of their heavenly country."

These numbered days, or the three years and a half, Bede says, embrace all the times of Christianity, as being the time which our Lord preached in the flesh. The 1260 days, or the three years and a half, he speaks of as the whole Christian period (on chap. xix.). So likewise Primasius. And Haymo,—“The time during which the Church, in retirement and repose from the cares of things temporal, is fed by the example and doctrine of her teachers, through the Epistles and Gospel, and by the aliment of the Divine Word. The 1260 days, or the three years and a half, which is the period of the reign of Antichrist, and also of the preaching of Christ; and, therefore, we may consider it as the whole of this present time, expressed by that number through which the Divine preaching commenced.” “The three years and a half,” says Aretas, “that is, the 1260 days, comprise the interval of time, the Apostasy, when those who contend manfully shall receive the unspeakable crown.”²

Such is the Church, being not of the world, while in the world; in seclusion and solitude of heart withdrawing from its temptations, supernaturally supported in Divine life of God, in the wilderness apart in prayer; or, to compare things spiritual with spiritual, in the measured inner sanctuary, where the altar and the worshippers are, unseen of man in the solitude of heaven; or as the sackcloth-clad Prophet of the desert,³ bearing witness of Christ, and persecuted by the world, for her “life is hid with Christ in God.”

² See pp. 180–184.

³ Matt. iii. 4.

SECTION VI

THE WAR IN HEAVEN

CHAP. XII. “⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels *were* to fight with the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁸ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

The object of this parenthetical introduction is exceedingly great and wonderful, partaking of the singular magnificence and sublimity of this Divine Book; it may be considered as the Epinikion, or victorious Hymn of the Martyrs: and, at the same time, as uplifting the veil, and opening the eyes, like the Prophet did of old, to the mountain filled with the armies of Heaven;¹ indicating that men are not alone in these contests with the powers of evil. “*Apparent facies, et numina magna.*” As our Lord in His parables introduces the spiritual world and personal evil agencies in the trials of individuals, so does St. John describe His Church as not alone in her great conflict: as setting forth, that when she has fled to God in the wilderness Christ fights for her; and the angels

¹ 2 Kings vi. 17.

that see His face, even Michael, the highest in dignity, watch over those little ones whom the Dragon is ready to devour. It is but a carrying out of what the Prophet Daniel says of the aid of Michael in this extremity; expanding, as usual, into a Divine vision the prophetic expression; it is the time of the great tribulation; it is "Michael, the great prince which standeth up for the children" of Israel, delivering "every one that shall be found written in the book."²

Having spoken of the woman in pangs of travail³ giving birth to the man-child, contemporaneous with these sufferings of men is another, as it were, scenic representation introduced of the *war in heaven*, for it is "the kingdom of heaven" on earth. "The heaven," says Tichonius, with Bede and others, "is the Church." But as the foregoing account had gone back to the Incarnation, and took the analogy from the earlier fall of Satan, so is this expressed in words that might relate to the same. This Aretas observes, and that in speaking of Antichrist he introduces this first fall of Satan from heaven as the original cause. But what is here more immediately intended is the power he had exercised in the world, being set on high and worshipped by the idolatry of the nations, and now by Christ overthrown; as our Lord Himself testified when the disciples first brought word that even devils were subject to them through His name, He added, "I saw Satan like lightning fall from Heaven." Where Aretas observes that our Lord does not speak in the past tense, but the imperfect, *ἐθεώπων*: as if beholding him then, having beheld him before, and not ceasing to behold him in His eternal existence with the Father. "For

² Dan. xii. 1.

³ The *ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων*, or birth pangs, Matt. xxiv. 8.

things divine," he adds, "have a living present energy not subject to periods of time ; and thus in the economy of the Incarnation is afforded to them this power." But here he is cast down by them that *overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb* ; indicating the primitive martyrs overthrowing the temples of the heathen, which is the power of the Man-child on God's throne. And the account seems to be here introduced to prepare men for the seductions of Antichrist, and for the *Woe*, perhaps the third and great *Woe*, pronounced from Heaven, "*to the earth and to the sea.*"

He *finds place no more in heaven* ; i.e. says Cornelius, "overcome by the saints, he no longer finds place in them, but is cast down among earthly men, the figure being taken from his own first fall from heaven." He found place in Paradise ; but in the kingdom of heaven, through Christ, he obtains no place, but is cast out to eat of the dust, to be trampled under foot. For, as St. John says, "Ye have overcome the wicked one."⁴ And our Lord Himself, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."⁵ "He is called by two names, says Aretas : "*Satan*, as the adversary of the Lord ; the *devil*, as slandering God to man, as he did to Adam, and good men and their virtues to God." It is remarkable that there has never been good in the world, but it has not only suffered persecution or martyrdom, but also false accusation, as of Satan speaking by evil men. Thus was it with Socrates ; thus with the early Christians : it is the mark of what Satan hates ; the shadow deepening with the intensity of light. The first great persecution under Nero was with false accusation. Thus is he described as the *accuser* : where Satan's accusing them seems to be, that if he had found occasion of reproach

⁴ 1 John ii. 14.

⁵ John xii. 31.

or sin in them, these martyrs would not have prevailed; that he falsely accused them, as he did Job, and they were tried by martyrdom. "They overcame him by having for their aid the Blood of the Lamb; that is," says Aretas, "that as He, not for Himself, but for us, gave His Blood; and whose type in the Old Passover was slain, not for itself, but for the salvation of the Hebrews, that the destroyer should not slay the first-born; so the martyrs of Christ, in zeal for the sacrifice of their Lord, valued more than their own lives the following of their Lord's Passion."

Here angels are introduced, as they often are, taking part in this victory; as, after our Lord overcame Satan in the temptation, angels came and ministered unto Him. "Angels call men their brethren," says Aretas, "after the example of their Lord, who says by the Prophet, 'I will declare Thy name unto My brethren:' and Himself to Mary Magdalene, 'Go and tell it to My brethren.'" But Tichonius says, "these must be saints in the Church, and not angels in Heaven above, that speak; nor can it be that the angels could here mean good men on earth by their brethren; for if so, they could not rejoice that he had been cast out to the earth; which must mean, to earthly-minded men who are not of the Church, which is heaven. The Greek commentators, in like manner, explain the earth and sea of those who mind earthly things, and are unstable as the sea. "For against these the enemy will prevail. But to those who pray to God, not only will it not result to their harm, but will be to their profit, from their being exercised thereby. His time is short as compared with the endless ages." "*Ye that dwell*," properly, "*ye that tabernacle* in heaven;" the tabernacle of God come to be with men; Christ tabernacling with us in the flesh; our sojourning in the wilderness is a tabernacling in heaven.

Thus turns the dragon to persecute the Church, and she, as an eagle, takes wing. It is a picture taken from nature itself; the eagle arising on expanded wings from the face of a serpent.

“¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.¹⁴ And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. ¹⁵ And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a river after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the river. ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

“Oh that I had wings like a dove!” says the Psalmist,⁶ when he would flee into “the wilderness,” and “be at rest;” but here, from the magnitude of the danger, the Church has given her miraculous powers of salvation—the angel-like wings of the Spirit—not as a dove, but *of the great eagle*. The expression is from the Old Testament, of God, by supernatural means, bearing Israel to the wilderness: “I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself;”⁷ and has a reference to that very beautiful and memorable figure of His training them on eagle’s wings.⁸ “They that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles.”⁹ And Origen says, that by the Body and Blood of the Lord, the wings, as of the eagle, are replenished.¹ But the marked expression of the “*two wings*” denotes some intended definite applica-

⁶ Ps. lv. 6.

⁷ Exod. xix. 4.

⁸ Deut. xxxii. 11.

⁹ Isa. xl. 31.

¹ Con. Cel. lib. vi. p. 305.

tion; and they are taken by ancient interpreters, as Tichonius, Primasius, Berengaudus, Aretas, Bede, for the two Testaments, the Old and New, by which the Church will be sustained in the times of Antichrist. Aretas says, "that when the devil found himself worsted in his contest with Christ after His Baptism; and, in like manner, that he was put to shame in the array he had made against His disciples, by their finding life in dying for Christ; and that he himself was condemned to earth as the serpent, and to eat of the earth, with those of earthly mind, and who possessed nothing of the heavenly new life and conversation,—he again began to persecute the Church from which had been taken the male people of the Lord, those who had not been softened by the effeminate pleasures of this life, but in the love of God and of their neighbour had their hearts borne aloof; and she received the two wings of the great eagle from God—from Him who 'rode upon the cherubims and did fly.'"²

When the Woman is now escaping to the wilderness and pursued by the Dragon, the point which most arrests our attention is, that she is *aided by the earth*; for "the earth," when it occurs in this manner, is ever used in a bad sense, and leads one to suspect that such aid, however it serves her for the present, must eventually be different from that aid which she had been just described as receiving from Heaven. The Church never really prospers but by the Cross. The stream which the Dragon sends after her is evidently that of the early persecutions; the earth helping her is the world becoming Christian; thence Antichrist arises, and this is the ensuing history.

The same may be inferred if *the earth* be taken in its symbolic character as the Christian world, that which after-

² Ps. xviii. 10.

wards gives birth to the second Beast, the visible Church as was Israel of old in her earthly character. "Water-floods," and the like, are a frequent figure of such trials; "the noise of his waves" is the madness of the people,"³ and God stilling the waves is put with subduing Egypt.⁴ And His bringing down the Assyrian hosts on Jerusalem is described as "the waters of the river, strong and mighty."⁵ "They came upon me," says Job, "as a wide breaking in of waters."⁶ These trials, therefore, in a manner are now ceasing.

It is to be observed, that on *the earth* coming to the aid of *the woman* by putting a stop to those persecutions, and the world embracing Christianity, the dragon then turns to make war,—not with the woman, who herself had fled in retirement of spirit to be with God, nor with the man child of her first-born, but with the seed of the woman that remained in the world, by raising up Antichrist, the great work of his power and stratagem. It is remarkable that the expression here is of *the seed* of the woman, as if the original pure Apostolic Church, the cause of his persecutions, was not now the open visible object before our eyes, but *the remnant of her seed*; and that not described as like the "man child" or martyrs; nor as those under the Fifth Seal, "slain" for the truths of God; but "*which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,*" or, as afterwards stated, "the faith of Jesus."⁷ Yet it is indeed still "the seed of the woman" which "shall bruise the serpent's head." And there shall be seen among them the two Witnesses in sackcloth, but it shall be amidst the Holy City trodden under foot, and the Temple defiled.

³ Ps. lxxv. 7.

⁴ Ps. lxxxix. 10, 11.

⁵ Isa. viii. 7.

⁶ Job xxx. 14.

⁷ Rev. xix. 12.

Hence the mediæval legend, that when Constantine received the Church with such signal honours and festivities, an angel in mid heaven was heard to cry that poison was infused into the air.

SECTION VII

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA

CHAP. XIII. “¹ And I stood upon the sand of the sea.”

As Balaam of old, when he looked toward Israel from afar, as he took up his inspired prophecy, so I looked to the many waters of the Gentile world, to behold what was thence to arise in the after-ages till the end,—that *sea* wherein is that leviathan of which Job speaks¹—that *sea* into which the burning mountain had been cast.² “*I stood*” (ἐστάθην, not ἐστάθη), seems the best reading, and much of the vividness of the descriptions in the Apocalypse is owing to St. John himself being so much present throughout.

“And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard; and his feet were *as the feet* of a bear; and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. ³ And I *saw* one of his heads as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed; and all the earth wondered after the beast. ⁴ And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him? ⁵ And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue—or to operate, act, or prevail—forty and two months. ⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His

¹ Job xli.

² Rev. viii. 8.

name, and His tabernacle, and those that dwell in Heaven. ⁷ And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If any man have an ear, let him hear."

This Beast, like the four Beasts of Daniel, "*arises out of the sea*," so often put for the nations; and is in itself composed of those four Beasts. It has the leopard-likeness of the third, the Grecian or Macedonian; it has the bear-feet of the second, the Persian; the lion-mouth of the first, the Babylonian; and the ten-horned head of the fourth beast, which is the Roman kingdom. Nor is that all, for it has also *seven heads*, which make up the heads of the four beasts, inasmuch as the leopard of Daniel has four heads,³ which four, together with the other three, form the *seven*. This appears to indicate that he represents some great principle of evil found in all the heathen kingdoms; the four of universality combined in one; together with the various attributes of those symbols. It is therefore a mistake to suppose that this is the fourth beast of Daniel, or the Roman power; what he has in common is the *ten horns*, which simply signify universal dominion; as he has also something in common with the other beasts, so he has this resemblance to the fourth. Nor can it be altogether the same beast; for ten horns on a beast with one head is different from ten horns on a seven-headed beast.

As Christianity is not national or local, but universal and spiritual, as in the true Israel of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither Roman nor barbarian; so its great enemy, or opposing power, is not marked by national or

³ "The beast had also *four heads*." Dan. vii. 6.

local distinctions. He has the swiftness—he has the spotted skin, the variety of opinion and creed; he has the feline and snake-like approaches of the Grecian leopard. He has also the rude and resistless grasp of the all-devouring Persian bear. He has the loud mouth and proud bearing of the Babylonian lion. He has also the ten horns, or extensive sway of imperial Rome. For this mysterious infidelity puts on the appearance of each of these in its all-pervading character; but it passes from those old heathen dominions into a new form of seven heads, as among “all tongues, and nations, and peoples,” who shall bear the Christian name. As it is neither Greek, nor Persian, nor Babylonian, neither does it appear, from a strict attention to the symbolic description, that Rome is here intended, any more than those three other empires.

It may be clearly seen, as before stated, that this Beast cannot be the fourth, or ten-horned beast of Daniel; it will rather be found to grow out of that, the last of the four. For it corresponds with the Little Horn which arises among the ten horns. He has “*a mouth speaking great things*,” the very words spoken of the Little Horn in Daniel; so likewise the remarkable expression that he “*makes war with the saints, and overcomes them*,” is spoken of both this Beast and the Little Horn; and they continue for the same space of time, three years and a half in Daniel, and the forty-two months of the Apocalypse.⁴ They both likewise continue till Christ comes in judgment, and are by Him cast into destruction,—“the burning flame,” “the lake of fire.”⁵ The Beast in the Apocalypse speaks “blasphemy against God,” the Little Horn in Daniel will “speak words against the Most High.”

⁴ See pp. 180–184.

⁵ Dan. vii. 11; Rev. xix. 20.

But none of these things are said of Daniel's fourth and ten-horned beast. The period of the Little Horn, which corresponds with that of this Beast in the Apocalypse, cannot be the period of the fourth beast itself, inasmuch as the Little Horn subsequently arises out of it. And again, the ten horns of Daniel do not exist together with the Little Horn, but these ten horns are found throughout, therefore the ten horns of Daniel cannot be the ten horns of the Apocalypse. It is simply the language of the same hieroglyphic—the ten-horned symbol which expresses manifold or multitudinous sway. Daniel writes of nations; St. John of the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness; St. John has a nearer and fuller view of the Little Horn of Daniel, which he sees as this great Beast of universal dominion.

Again; this Little Horn of Daniel must in no wise be confused, as it has been by some, and even by Dean Woodhouse, with the two-horned Beast of the Apocalypse; for no date or duration is assigned to this two-horned Beast; nor any attributes of the Little Horn; nor is he called the son of destruction; nor does he "make war;" nor does he speak blasphemies; nor does he deny Christ. This ten-horned Beast is undoubtedly Antichrist. He is strongly characterized by St. John as he that "goeth into perdition,"⁶ and is called by St. Paul "the son of perdition,"⁷ and is especially thus marked in Daniel,⁸ and mentioned by St. Peter with the same word of "perdition;"⁹—"the wicked one whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." The same is shown in his mark as coming out "of the abyss," the place of Satan (chap. xi. 7; xvii. 8), and that Satan gives him his

⁶ Rev. xvii. 8-11.

⁷ 2 Thess. ii. 3.

⁸ See Dan. vii. 11, 12-26; xi. 45; viii. 25. ⁹ ἀπωλεία, 2 Pet. ii.

throne and power. And as the Dragon so expressly gives him "his power and throne," so it is said of him by St. Paul, "whose coming is after the working of Satan."¹ And indeed the "eyes like the eyes of man" attributed to him by Daniel, are, says Jerome, "to indicate that he is a man, although like an incarnation of Satan; for in him," as St. Jerome adds, "Satan dwells."

That this ten-horned Beast is Antichrist is taken for granted by all ancient interpreters, as by St. Irenæus, Tertullian, Victorinus, Andreas, St. Gregory; and indeed needs no proof; and that Antichrist is also the Little Horn of Daniel.

This Beast cannot represent any one kingdom, for it is designedly compounded of the four beasts of Daniel; which must signify an universal principle of evil as found in all infidel kingdoms: moreover, being the same as the Dragon himself in the emblems, it must represent something as universal as his power among the nations; neither can it be confined to one. "In whom," says St. Irenæus, of this Beast, "all iniquity and deceit is confluent, that it may be all cast into the fire together."² "Although," says St. Augustin, "it be a matter of more diligent enquiry what that Beast may be, yet it is not unsuitable to right faith to understand thereby the city of the wicked, and the infidel people as opposed to the faithful and the city of God."³ Tichonius, Primasius, and Bede, consider it as the whole body of the reprobate through successive generations. Indeed it is expressly described as universal as the reign of Christ, "*over every tribe, and tongue, and nation;*" and still more emphatically and twice stated, that "*all shall worship him who dwell upon the earth,*

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 9.

² Lib. v.

³ De Civ. Dei. lib. xx. ch. ix.

*whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life."*⁴ This indicates his power to be as extensive as the Christian religion can be, to say the least. It must comprehend "every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ." It would be difficult to apply it to any fulfilment short in extent of what St. John in his Epistles, and in his Gospel, calls "the world." There is nothing Christian about this *first* beast; nothing religious or spiritual; he rises out of the *sea* of the nations. We must be careful not to confuse it with the two-horned, Lamb-like beast that follows, and takes its rise from "the earth."

The number *ten* of his *horns*, St. Augustin⁵ takes for universality; and something of the same must be the case with the "*seven heads*," or seven mountains, the strongholds of his power as of indefinite number, but with the emblematic power of the seven as signifying the Christian world, or this the last dispensation, that of the sevenfold Spirit. Nor is this incompatible with Aretas, that the ten intimates the fulness and completeness of all wickedness, and the horns their power and glory thence resulting: for this is what the devil offers, "all the kingdoms of the world" and the "power and glory of them."⁶ And the seven also he interprets in this their mystical, rather than literal sense, as the fulness of times, and combining with this sensible world the kingdom incorruptible and eternal.

"*They worshipped the Dragon which gave power unto the Beast,*" i.e. our Lord's temptation is renewed in some mysterious manner, so that men worship Satan on account of the wealth and power of the world which he bestows, under this sway of Antichrist.

The same circumstance of his being in a manner co-

⁴ Rev. xiii. 7, 8; xvii. 8. ⁵ De Civ. Dei, lib. xx. chap. xxiii.

⁶ Luke vi. 5, 6.

extensive and coeval with the Christian Church is shown by the time of his continuance, which is the same period as that of the Apostolic Bride in the wilderness, the same as that of the Holy City trodden under foot, of the continuance of the two Witnesses. His intimate connection with Christianity is afterwards shown.

The great characteristic of Antichrist—the denial of the Son—is here abundantly implied; for his first mark is that “*on his heads is a name or names of blasphemy*,” he is “full of names of blasphemy” (chap. xiii. 1; xvii. 3); but “blasphemy” signifies the denial of Christ, as St. Paul says, “I compelled them to blaspheme,” *i.e.* to deny Christ; and the Jews resisted, “contradicting and blaspheming,” *i.e.* denying Christ.⁷ Add to which, “*there was given unto him a mouth speaking blasphemies*,” and “*he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and those that tabernacle in Heaven*,” which indicates his denial of Christ come in the flesh, God tabernacling among us. The tabernacle of God is, says Aretas, the Word made flesh, or the Incarnation, against which all blasphemy is turned. The expressions seem to intimate the Blessed Trinity and the Church. As he is Antichrist, so all the expressions indicate that the one cause of all his opposition is Christ; those who overcome him do so “by the blood of the Lamb;” with the Lamb they are gathered on Mount Zion; the expression is twice repeated that he is the object of admiration or of worship to all those “whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,” which book is explained as “the book of the Lamb that was slain” (chap. xiii. 8; xvii. 8). In both cases with an evident reference to the same expression of “the book” in Daniel, and spoken of

⁷ Acts xxvi. 11; xiii. 4.

this occasion of the great trial, when Michael shall stand up and deliver "every one that shall be found written in the Book."⁸

"*He opened his mouth,*" this the *mouth* of Antichrist, the many mouths in the armies of Antichrist in the sixth Trumpet⁹ will be the great trial of faith. "*There was given unto him a mouth,*" as indicating," says Aretas, "the unspeakable long-suffering of God; and that we should receive such things as intended to exercise and prove our disposition towards Him Who permits them." Thus the Psalmist foretells so forcibly of the mouth set against heaven, and the tongue walking the earth,¹ the "throat an open sepulchre;"² and set forth in the type Sennacherib,³ the Assyrian, or Babylonian mouth of the Beast.

"*Who is able to make war with the Beast?*" It is the same energy of expression as afterwards, "What is like unto this great city?" (chap. xviii. 18,) but it appears to be said here with reference to the great battle for which all things throughout the Apocalypse are preparing, in which he is overcome by the Lamb. But it is now said every day.

The wonder and worship of the Beast, it has been observed, is not partial, but universal, "to all those who dwell on the earth," except the faithful elect, who are from the foundation of the world in the Lamb's book of life. They that are of God hear Christ. They that are not of God will receive Antichrist. And the cause of this admiration is his resuscitation when apparently slain. In this chapter "*one of his heads was wounded* as unto death; *and his deadly wound was healed,*" which is twice spoken of (verses 3 and 12): but afterwards he is twice described as "the

⁸ Dan. xii. 1.

⁹ See p. 166.

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 9.

² Ps. v. 9.

³ 2 Kings xviii. xix.

Beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (chap. xvii. 8-11). Dead yet living, the false semblance, says Bede, of Christ and His resurrection. It must be the deadly blow he had received by Christ's death, or by His primitive martyrs, who "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," the subject of the rejoicing in Heaven in the previous chapter.

The difficulty is that the first mention is of one head wounded; for, as Cornelius à Lapide says, it seems as if one head embraced all. It may be the overthrow of his power, especially as represented by Rome, one of the strongholds of infidelity, and which then was equivalent to the whole. Or one of the seven heads may be that one of the seven hills which was the seat and representative of all idolatry—the Capitol. Or it may be that what before was but one head, is now revived in the Christian times with seven heads. The evil spirit cast out returns to his home with seven other evil spirits. For before he was but as a beast with one head, but now he appears with seven. It describes what we now witness, infidelity appeared destroyed by Christianity—yet is not: the infidel world overthrown by Christ's death gains strength again: it is wonderful; it is overpowering, as a stumbling-block or temptation to all of earthly mind. The report mentioned by St. Augustin⁴ and by St. Jerome,⁵ that Nero would rise from the dead and become Antichrist, shows how little it was understood: but connected with some mysterious resuscitation of heathen Rome.

Satan appears as the Dragon with seven heads and ten horns, but he is overcome, the male child is taken to Heaven. The Dragon then disappears, and from his place, *i.e.* the abyss, or bottomless pit, arises this Beast with seven heads and ten horns, to whom he has given

⁴ De Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. xix.

⁵ In Dan. cap. xi.

his throne and kingdom. That is, the Devil was cast down and destroyed from his kingdom in the idolatries, sacrifices, and oracles of the heathens ; he then disappears and exercises his power, revived and restored in Antichrist, *i.e.* by means of some spiritual idolatry equally extensive, but of a more subtle kind, operating universally against Christ, through all time and place until the end. For the Dragon's throne was idolatry. "It is the Dragon himself," says Aretas, "overthrown with all his idolatrous worship by Christ, who comes forth in this new personification out of that abyss of hell itself, into which the devils entreated that they might not be sent."

"¹⁰ If any man leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth : if any man killeth with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Herein is the patience and the faith of the saints."

In the descriptions of the Apocalypse there always occurs individual guidance and warning. "In patience," says Aretas, "is the keeping and salvation of the soul ; as the Lord Himself says, 'In patience keep ye your souls.'" This patience will consist in waiting upon God, without having recourse to weapons of carnal warfare. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord ;" He "shall fight for you."⁶ For "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Thus St. Paul to the Hebrews speaks of those who through patience overcome. And St. Peter, "as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind," "and be not afraid of their terror." Thus, too, the Witnesses prevail, "not by might, nor by power," but by the Spirit of God ; through Him Who, by submission to the Cross, "led captivity captive."

⁶ Exod. xiv. 13.

SECTION VIII

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH

CHAP. XIII. “¹¹ And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a Lamb, and he spake as a dragon. ¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first Beast before him; and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first Beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from Heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴ And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which it was given him to do in the sight of the Beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the Beast, which hath the wound of the sword, and did live. ¹⁵ And it was given him to give life unto the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed. ¹⁶ And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that they should give them a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. ¹⁷ And that no man might be able to buy or sell, save he that hath the mark, the name of the Beast, or the number of his name.”

The second *Beast* differs from the first as being of a religious and spiritual character; this is shown at once by the “*two horns like a Lamb*,” and by his *rising from the earth*.” For the earth, in distinction from the sea, represents in the Apocalypse the land of Israel. It seems that this Beast is the same as “the false Prophet” afterwards mentioned. It is here represented as the Beast, with reference to the other Beast with which it is so mysteriously connected; and also to the Lamb on Mount Sion, described in conjunction with them. It may represent what is subsequently seen as the Harlot, or Babylon; but as different forms and aspects of the same spiritual wickedness;

hypocrisy gaining power and wealth, and then becoming as Babylon; and thus for a time as merged in her and identical with her; for no explanation is given of this Beast, as there is of the first Beast and of the Harlot in the 17th chapter. The interpretation of the mystery being reserved, and not given till after the seven Vials, would appear to indicate that it will not be understood till those Judgments of God have been poured upon the world. That which has the horns like a Lamb, in feigned semblance, must be a false Christ; and a Harlot is a false Church. The false Prophet and the second Beast are both described alike as causing men to "*worship the Beast*" and "*the image of the Beast*," yet they do not appear to be altogether identical with the Harlot that sits upon him, for Babylon appears to be destroyed before the false Prophet, and to arise subsequently.

Throughout since the mystery of the Church has been introduced after St. John's eating of the Book, all the representations seem connected with some corruption, some *ἀποστασία*, in the Church itself. Thus it is the Holy City and outer Temple which is defiled (chap. xi. 1, 2, 8). It is in the Holy City itself that the two Witnesses are slain, and their bodies left unburied. The great ten-horned Beast of all blasphemy and wickedness which rises out of the abyss, never appears apart from some mysterious spiritual iniquity, either as the second Beast of Lamb-like dissimulation, or the false Prophet, or as the mystical Babylon and adulterous Church. The only occasion on which he appears without these is when he slays the Witnesses, and that is with the Holy City trodden under foot, and the Jerusalem "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" taking part with him and rejoicing; this preliminary circumstance, taken in conjunction with these

his associates afterwards occurring, seems to furnish us with a clue to the understanding of the whole, as different appearances and developments of the same principle. For we naturally ask, Where are those his associates? under what other name or character do they lie concealed? It must be in some sense or other the carnal Jerusalem. The infidel Beast never appearing but in connection with one of these, may be owing to this, that the Apocalypse being the description of the Christian Church does not speak of the first Beast except as it comes in connection with it; or it may be that the Church visible will never be separate from it by the wiles of the Dragon. And one great object of this Divine Book appears to be, to assure us that during this desolation of the Church the Lamb on Mount Sion will be all the while gathering His own out of her; the two Witnesses more or less heard and their presence felt; the Word which under the first Seal went forth unaccompanied on the White Horse will, notwithstanding, be seen to have a great army with Him; and it is not till at last, when her destruction is coming on, that the sons of God will, by a distinct Divine voice, be summoned to come out of the mystical Babylon; such, His faithful ones, being described as those "who keep the commandments of God, and have the witness of Jesus Christ."¹

In the description of *the first Beast* there is something wanting to complete our idea of Antichrist; for there is none of that hypocrisy and deceivableness which other parts of Scripture lead one to expect. This is filled up by *the second Beast*. "The Man of Sin," as described by St. Paul, seems to comprehend both of these Beasts.² As also the Antichrist of St. John's Epistles.³ For of the "many Antichrists" that were in the world, St. John

¹ Conf. xii. 17; xiv. 12. ² 2 Thess. ii. ³ 1 John ii. 18.

alludes to no instance of heathen infidelity but of Christian apostasy. And St. Peter's false prophets are rather of this last.⁴ The accounts here culminate as it were in one. Bede says, "Another Beast in office, but otherwise one with the former." Primasius, that "both Beasts evidently form but one body, practise one course of wickedness." The first is infidelity without semblance of good, Antichrist denying the Son; but without the second he succeeds not, for the second is of those who confess the faith but in deeds deny it; even as the devils make confession of Christ, "the Holy One of God."

Both combined describe that intimate connection with religion which we suppose Antichrist to have; they represent, under another form, the Holy City trodden under foot, Antichrist reigning in Jerusalem and slaying therein the two Witnesses. They bear out the numerous intimations that he will be connected with the Church of God; that he is set forth by Caiaphas in the old, and Judas in the new dispensation; that he will arise from one of the twelve tribes of Israel; that his coming will be with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; as Satan transformed into an angel of light; the abomination that maketh desolate in the Holy place; that with him will be "the idol shepherd" with the withered arm and darkened eye;⁵ of Balaam the prophet of God, held up so much to our warning; of the falling away or apostasy from which he should arise; of Aaron and the Levites found in idolatry when Moses descended from the Mount of God; of apostles failing in faith to cast out the evil spirit when Christ came down from the Transfiguration: connected with His awful warning of faith failing on the earth when the Son of Man cometh: "of false Christs," as if exacting

⁴ 2 Peter ii.

⁵ Zech. xi. 17.

worship, and "false prophets," as if effecting it; such as should deceive, if it were possible, even the elect: of St. John's expression respecting the "many Antichrists," that "they went out from us, but were not of us:" of primitive anticipations, that, as St. Augustin says, "*Exeat de medio ecclesiæ mysterium iniquitatis*;"⁶ and St. Gregory, "*Sacerdotum ei preparatur exercitus*."⁷ Add to these the good of all ages bearing testimony, either directly or incidentally, to the corruptions of the clergy and of the Church, their intimations from Scripture and experience that such were connected with the coming Antichrist: and the more direct application of these to the Church of their own days; as Origen complains of the avarice and ambition of bishops; Aretas, in the tenth century, far more strongly;⁸ the Abbot Joachim, in the thirteenth century, considers even Antichrist himself to be a carnal and effeminate prelaacy; Peter John of Olivi, the Franciscan, in the fourteenth, speaks of the "awful blindness of the carnal Church, all moved against the evangelical spirit of Christ:" and of these two Beasts thus going forth in that darkest of all nights, of which it is said in the Psalm, "Thou makest darkness that it may be night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do move."⁹

The two Beasts together form the mystery: the second Beast is all deceivableness; the first full of blasphemy; the second causes to be slain, the first wars and prevails. He fills up what St. Paul calls the strong working of deceivableness; his coming *κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ*, which he repeats as the *ἐνέργειαν πλάνης*,¹ wherefore "God shall send upon them a strong delusion," *i.e.* power given to this

⁶ De Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. xix.

⁷ "Quod dici nefas est." Epist. xviii. vol. ii. p. 744.

⁸ See p. 213. ⁹ Ps. civ. 20. ¹ 2 Thess. ii. 9-11.

second Beast, "that they should believe *the* lie," or the false one, τῷ ψεύδει or Antichrist. So much is this mysterious efficacy applied to the second Beast, that the expression "he *works*," or brings about and effects, arrests attention as eight times repeated in this short account.

He "*comes up out of the earth*," i.e. from the visible Church of God; and he has "*two horns like a Lamb*;" "he professes Christ, His lowliness and sanctity," says St. Gregory. The two horns as of "the Lamb of God," the name by which John the Baptist pointed out Christ. "They are," says Haymo, "the feigned semblance of His innocency and purity, His doctrine and miracles." Primasius explains them as the two Testaments; which are indeed the horns or powers of Christ; Peter Olivi, as false Christs and false prophets which induce men to worship the carnal desire and glory of the first secular Beast: others, as ecclesiastical and spiritual powers. It may be observed it is not "in sheep's clothing," but with *horns*, as indicating his power and honour arising from these pretensions; *two*, as corresponding with the two Witnesses of the Lamb: "*like* those of a Lamb," says Aretas, not real, but feigned. Two is of division; whereas it is said of Christ He hath "the strength of an unicorn,"² in allusion to the Cross, "the hiding of His power;"³ or He has "seven horns"⁴ in the dispensation of His Spirit. His *speech is as a dragon*—not as the former Beast—the mouth of a lion and "speaking great things," but rather with subtlety and feigned persuasion, as the old serpent in Paradise. "For he would not be like a lamb," says Tichonius, "if he spake openly; he feigns Christianity." "Speaking lies in hypocrisy."

As if he had no independent existence of his own, his

² Num. xxiv. 8.

³ Hab. iii. 4.

⁴ Rev. v. 6.

further character is the putting forth the power of the first Beast ; and that Beast the old heathenism of the world revived in a marvellous manner, to whom he altogether ministers. " His armour-bearer," says St. Irenæus, " the false prophet." He is like the magicians to Pharaoh ; as priests of Baal to Ahab ; as Balaam to Balak. " The preachers and ministers," says St. Gregory, " of Antichrist."

" *He deceiveth those that dwell on the earth,*" as it was said of the first Beast, that " all that dwell on the earth shall worship him ;" *i.e.* in distinction from those who are spoken of as " dwelling in Heaven," whose life is hid with Christ in God, and whose " conversation is in Heaven," enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. The " strong delusion " is sent on those that " received not the love of the truth:" for those only are injured by the seductions of the second, and worship the first Beast. Nor need we look far abroad for a competent understanding of these things ; for the Lamb-like Beast, *i.e.* a Christian Priesthood or its chief Pastors, burning incense to the many, *i.e.* to the Antichristian multitude, or the Beast seven-headed and ten-horned. " Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea" for the application of it, for in every place it is " about our path " of daily life, and " about our bed " in nightly contemplation.

The object of every false religion, or corruption of the faith, is to reconcile men to the world, or worship of the Beast ; ministering to pride of intellect, or sensuality, or self-righteousness ; heresy and superstition, by lowering the object of worship ; hypocrisy, by darkening it ; all such manifold spiritual deceits bring men to substitute something else for Christ, and that is the worship of the ten-horned Beast.

The comment of Lacunza, the Jesuit, is much to be con-

sidered, as bearing out the Scriptures, and sanctioned by sad experience; he says, "The Christian Priesthood will be the stumbling-block and most perilous snare. As the Hebrew Priesthood utterly undid the Jews, and opened the mouths of the people to deny and reject Christ; a Priesthood full of human respects, of fleshly wisdom, and the friendship of the world. In like manner, the Christian Priesthood, not apostate or openly unbelieving, but through the aboundings of iniquity, will be aiding the persecutor, when the witnesses shall be as Elias was, but one among many. Throughout the world darkening the truth through lukewarmness, and by subtle persuasion leading men to some secret adoration or subjection to the first Beast whom they ought openly to resist: coming with the two lamb-like horns, or the arms and the force of the spiritual power; and the tongue of deceitful persuasion; and excommunicating or publicly marking with apostasy the faithful few. 'For,' says the Evangelist, 'the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.'"

SECTION IX

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

CHAP. XIII. " ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six."

We have been proceeding throughout according to the general rule of Catholic interpretation, in supposing the symbolic language to be made up of ideas, lying in the depth of Scripture, and to be ascertained by spiritual analogies, rather than particular literal fulfilments, which,

whether they may also be true or not, lie beyond the range and sphere of this attempt. Moreover, on this subject of *the number of the Beast*, an especial appeal is made to "*wisdom*" and "*understanding*," i.e. Divine wisdom and the understanding heart; and it appears unworthy of such a mystery, and the sublimity of this Divine Book, to suppose this to contain a secret such as might be unravelled by human ingenuity, like an enigmatical word or riddle, but rather some truth to be found in the sacred language of numbers. Whereas in the immediate pressure of their times, men have not only seen Antichrist, but in the mystical number have read the name of their enemy: under the Roman emperors it was seen in *Latinus*; under apostasy and Arianism in the Greek *ἀποῦμαι* of Hippolytus; by some Christians deciphered as Mahomet; by Romanists afterwards as Martin Luther; and by Protestants again as *Latinus*. And although, indeed, so great an authority as St. Irenæus mentions with some consideration such solutions as *Latinus* and *Titan* in the spelling of the Greek characters; yet he himself dwells, as most agreeable to his own understanding, on the general idea of the symbolic signification.

The number *Six* is ever of Antichrist, the Sixth Epistle, the Sixth Seal, the Sixth Trumpet, the Sixth Vial, in ever extending cycles, as if 6— and 60— and 600. At the Sixth hour on the Sixth day is the power of Antichrist, "the power of darkness," of being forsaken of God,— "the great tribulation." The number Six is of man, on the Sixth day created; of Adam, in whom "all die," without the seventh of sanctification;—the creature without the rest of God: ever increasing by ten the aggregate of individuals, multiplying 6, and 60, and 600;

of men in self-sufficiency without God : man at his best estate without Christ ; unsanctified without the seventh ; unregenerate without the eighth day. Thus literally it is "*the number of the beast is the number of man.*" Of Antichrist, who hath "eyes like the eyes of man"¹—"the man of sin ;" human though diabolical ; who is but a man, though it would be esteemed as a God. "It is the summing up," says St. Irenæus, "of that universal apostasy which will be in the six thousand years of the world completed in six days." It will be God's rejection of His own work formed in six days. "Containing in himself all wickedness, that it may be cast into the fire together, he was well named 666. Consummating in himself all the apostasy before the flood, when it is said Noah was 600 years old ;² and consummating the wickedness that ensued till the furnace of fire, on not worshipping the image of Nebuchadnezzar, whose breadth was 6 cubits, and its height 60 cubits." To these thoughts from Irenæus may be added what Bede notices, that 666 talents were the yearly revenue of Solomon.³ This coincidence is most remarkable, for Solomon is the type of the Church when it becomes amplified,—when the riches of the world flowed into it : and this is a description of the second Beast, spiritual, Christian, and ecclesiastical, causing men to worship the first Beast, or the world. The key of the Apocalypse is always found in Scripture itself.

To have "the Name of God written on their foreheads," consists not in written characters of "Alpha and Omega," but is to have their beginning and end in Christ and the inward witness of His Spirit ; and to be marked through spiritual wickedness with the *name and number of the Beast* is to have the golden image of Babylon, 60 and 6 ;

¹ Dan. vii. 8.² Gen. vii. 6.³ 2 Chron. ix. 13.

and the gold of Solomon, 600 and 60 and 6 in the secret idolatry of the heart. This is to be of the mystic Babylon and of the false Jerusalem. This is *the mark on the forehead and the hand*; to have this idolatry in thought and action; or else to be excommunicated and set at naught by the two Beasts, or the Christian world.

Further, it is to be observed that there are four things specified with respect to the first Beast, and brought about by the agency of the second, in which the condemnation of the unfaithful will consist (chap. xiii. 15-17; xix. 20; xx. 4). They are mysterious and difficult to understand, but seem to contain some opposition to the four first Commandments, in which the love of God consists. The first is to worship the Beast, which is in violation of the first Commandment; the second, his image as opposed to the second Commandment; the third, to have the mark of his name, whereas the third Commandment is of keeping holy the Name of God; or fourthly, "the number of His name;" but the fourth Commandment is of the seventh day, as being the day of God, and is explained as referring to all that worship which is hallowed by the Sabbath or the seventh. The Seven is the number which pervades the Apocalypse, as being the sacred number, the number of the Holy Spirit. In like manner, the number Six is connected with the Beast and his name. These marked on the forehead or the right hand; that is, regulating or influencing the intellect or the practice, are marks of the condemnation. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."⁴ And this is seen in an opposition to the first table of the Decalogue, which is the foundation of God's kingdom, that knowledge of God in which is eternal life.

⁴ Rom. i, 28.

Again ; this “mystery of iniquity” hath the like contrast with the “mystery of godliness,” as it appears in the New Testament, of which the four first Commandments contain the type ; for the “express Image” of the invisible God is Christ ; and His Name is that which Christians bear ; His mark is the Cross ; and His number is in the sanctification of the Spirit, the sevenfold gift of Pentecost.

SECTION X

THE LAMB ON MOUNT SION

CHAP. XIV. “¹ And I looked, and lo, the Lamb standing on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, having His name and His Father’s name written upon their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder ; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. ³ And they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders ; and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are they which were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins : these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth : these were redeemed from among men, the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile ; *for* they are without fault *before the throne of God.*”

Before the judgments went forth on Jerusalem we had, in the seventh chapter, the sealing of the elect and their companies in Heaven ; and now, in like manner, before the pouring forth of the seven Vials ; and after the awful account of the Beasts, we have interposed the vision of the Redeemed. This vision of the 144,000 carries on and extends the former vision of the Sealed, it explains who they are, as not belonging unto the temporal, but the

spiritual Israel, whose distinction is not national but moral; it carries on the vision as continuous; first set forth in those sealed in the fall of the earthly Jerusalem, but here marked as those preserved through the corruptions and ruins of the Christian Israel.⁵ They were before described alone, but now with the Lamb, as opposed to the two Beasts, and as leading the virgin company, with their glad singing and rejoicing, in contrast to the desolation below; they are in the world, but not of the world, having in their hearts the joy of the Holy Ghost, for God hath revealed to them by His Spirit what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. They have the "manifold more in this present time with persecutions," having given up wives and children for the sake of the Lamb, to follow Him throughout. "The remnant of Israel," no deceitful tongue shall be found among them; they shall feed in quiet pastures without fear.⁶ The presence of the four Living Creatures indicate that it is still the throne of God, and "the kingdom of Heaven," as set forth in the Church below.

Very magnificent is the description of the "*voice*" heard "*from Heaven*;" "*the voice*" is, at the same time, "*of many waters*" and "*of great thunder*," and of unearthly melodies; divinely terrible, yet divinely sweet. The thunder-voice is heard by the ear, but in the song there is mystery; as speaking of that peace which passeth understanding; known of those who are taught by the Spirit, who have the seal of the adoption, the "*redeemed from the earth*." "Songs in the night" of this world, "in the house of" this our "pilgrimage."

This is the fulfilment of the many promises: "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Sion;"⁷ "Unto the

⁵ See pp. 109-111.

⁶ Zeph. iii. 13.

⁷ Ps. ii. 6.

God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion ;”⁸ as St. Paul says, “Ye are come unto the Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem.”⁹ The symbolic number is expressive of the predestined multitude of the spiritual Israel ; the twelve-numbered aggregate of the twelve-measured city ; sealed safe from the destroying angel ; marked by their number of the Twelve to be of the heavenly Jerusalem, as the Six marked the others to be of the world ; and in distinction from the stamp of the Beast and his name, sealed with *the name of God* ; as said under the promise of the Sixth epistle of Him who is kept from “the great tribulation :”—“I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, New Jerusalem, and My new name.”¹ They are “Israelites indeed, and without guile,” in distinction from the wiles of the lamb-like Beast—the cup of Babylon ; “*the mouth without deceit*,” is opposed to “the speech like the dragon :” and they are *faultless* as “the Lamb without blemish ;” the first-born taken as little children, undefiled and without blame : “*redeemed from the earth*,” or rather “bought ;” for, as Aretas observes, it is the expression which St. Paul uses, “Ye are bought with a price,”² as the first-born redeemed by the Lamb.³ These are of “the pure in heart,” who “see God ;” those “little ones” of whom Christ speaks in such emphatic terms ; whose angels see the face of His Father in Heaven ; they are the little ones taken up into His arms.

Of this virgin company Aretas says, “Marriage is honourable, but as one star differeth from another star in glory, so these are pre-eminent for their virginity. In proportion to the purification of each will be the knowledge of God ; for, as St. Paul says, ‘then shall I know even as

⁸ Ps. lxxxiv. 7. ⁹ Heb. xii. 22. ¹ Rev. iii. 12.

² 1 Cor. vi. 20.

³ Exod. xiii. 13.

also I am known,'⁴ meaning by knowledge the indwelling of love. For 'in My Father's house are many mansions.'" "Those," says Bede, "who in the privilege of angelical chastity offer themselves entire as a burnt offering." In them is fulfilled the promise, "Unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters." "Even them will I bring to *My holy mountain*."⁵ But Tichonius says, "Not virgins in body only do we understand in this place, but the whole Church which holds a pure faith." "For through Baptism, or through repentance, we are capable of being made in the inner man virgins and without guile." Thus Isaiah adds, "Yet will I gather others to Him beside those."

SECTION XI

THE THREE ANGELS IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN

CHAP. XIV. "6 And I saw another angel flying in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Every description in the Apocalypse is in itself wonderful for sublimity and beauty, and no less so in the arrangement and order in which the parts are interwoven: and here, to support the faith of the elect under the terrible description of the two Beasts, in the previous chapter, we have in rapid and glorious succession, the Church invisible; and then the everlasting Gospel, in winged flight heralding the end;—then the fall of Baby-

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁵ Isa. lvi. 5-7; conf. Rev. xiv. 7-4.

lon;—and then the Judgment. “That we may not suppose,” says Bede, “that the body of the Lamb hath yielded to the two Beasts, He shows His Church shining in her wonted brightness and number.” But not only this, it is, as in the sight of God and His angels, the quick folding up of the whole as already finished and done. It is the *everlasting Gospel* in brief simplicity, in distinction from these temporary troubles; it is the carrying out in exceeding power of description our Lord’s discourse, “This Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Thus while men are worshipping the Beast the Gospel is being preached to them; and the loud cry of the evangelic herald is heard, “*Fear God, for the hour of His judgment hath come,*”—as if in this place applied, “Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do;” but “fear Him who hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

And here there is a peculiar force in the expression, “*Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.*” This especial reference to Him, “by Whom, and for Whom, all things were created,”⁶ is introduced throughout this Divine Book. The angel swears by Him, the Creator of heaven and earth and all things, that time shall be no more (see chap. x. 6). These objects of nature the angels are not to hurt till the redeemed are sealed (chap. vii. 3). And on these expressly and in their order, *the earth, the sea, the fountains of water, and the heavenly bodies*, are the judgments poured, in the Seals, and in the Trumpets, and especially under the Vials.

“⁸And there followed another angel, saying, Fallen, fallen is

⁶ Col. i. 16.

Babylon, the great city! because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Immediately, in the language of the ancient Prophets, *Babylon* is already *fallen* and gone.⁷ It is not, as by some supposed, the beginning of her fall, but it is mentioned by anticipation, in like manner as the last Judgment that follows, for the support of the faithful under Antichrist. "Fuit Ilium." It is all over.

As we had an incidental mention of Antichrist in Jerusalem (chap. xi. 7) before he was fully described, so here occurs the mention of Babylon before the account of her is given; but the introduction of her in this place seems to connect her with the second Beast; for it is followed by the condemnation of effects attributed to him. The "*wine of her fornication*," from the place where it occurs, seems explained to mean his peculiar seductiveness in inducing men to worship the image and receive the mark of the Beast. To be in Babylon is not necessarily condemnation; but it is so to be deceived by her to worship the Beast. The scene is progressive, Antichrist was before in Jerusalem; but now the Israel of God is captive in Babylon; its very name, "Confusion," as Tichonius and others interpret it, furnishes of itself the full explanation: so great is the confusion now become between the Church and the world. And a change is taking place in the figures. The lamb-like Beast and the Harlot come forth in contrast with the Lamb and the Bride; the false Prophet and the false Church—correlative and corresponding, but not appearing together, and in some manner different; for the latter has now for a time taken place of the former. The second Beast causes the first Beast to be worshipped, and gives life to his image, though apparently inferior as

⁷ Isa. xxi. 9; Jer. li. 8.

his servant or armour-bearer. The Harlot sits on the Beast, as if with power over him until destroyed by him. The Harlot seems to be the state for a season only. Thus in the present summary as it were of the entire period, the fall of Babylon precedes the judgments on the Beast. In another place the ten kings (chap. xvii. 16, 17), after burning Babylon, give their power to the Beast. And afterwards (in chap. xviii. 21), the destruction of Babylon has taken place, and she is found no more; and then ensues the contention of the Beast with his armies (chap. xix. 19, 20); and when he is caught, with him is the false prophet, and therefore the false prophet, or the second Beast, cannot be altogether the same with the Harlot. After Babylon is destroyed the nations of the world lament over her; but the false prophet is not taken till the last with the Beast, and none to lament over them. The false prophet is with the Beast under the sixth Vial, preparing for the battle; but "the great river" of Babylon had been previously dried up when that takes place. Heathen Rome and adulterous Jerusalem were united in persecuting Christ and His Church; but Rome rose against Jerusalem and destroyed it; so the Beast with its ten horns is united with the Harlot in persecuting the true Church of God; but the ten horns of the Beast afterwards destroy the Harlot. Indeed, the Babylon, or the Harlot, may represent the apostasy of which St. Paul speaks, which is to precede, and after which the Man of Sin will be revealed in his fulness, for in these prophecies the fall of Babylon precedes the full development of the Beast. But of this hereafter.

"⁹ And a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand; ¹⁰ He shall also drink of the wine

of the wrath of God, which is poured without mixture in the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. ¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

The introduction of the torments of the wicked rapidly ensues in these visions of the flying Angels, as in Scripture necessarily connected with the reign of the Beast. Babylon is inserted in the picture between the preaching of the Gospel and the Beast, inasmuch as she is made up of the two, and that the Gospel being preached in vain brings the Woe on the unrepenting Church. Very awful is every expression in the torments that ensue; for the "cup of fornication" becomes *a cup of wrath* unmingled and without alloy; no water in the wine, no mitigation, no repentance, no third part smitten, but entire, irremediable. It is, moreover, "*in the presence of the Angels*," as infinitely increased by the sense of their purity and bliss; and "*in the presence of the Lamb*," "as in remembrance," Aretas observes, "of that sacrifice of salvation which they had despised." And "*the smoke ascending*" is an indication to all of the completion of their punishment by fire, for smoke intimates the presence of fire; as it were a cloud of wailing which ascends, not for a time only, but for ever; which Isaiah has expressed by "the undying worm, and the fire which is not quenched." It is "the wrath of God *abiding*"⁸ on them.

"*And in this is the patience of the saints*," that they look to the future beyond the veil, and see the everlasting torments of the wicked, and the release of the good,

⁸ John iii. 36.

which death brings, so that they "fear them not." This is their patience. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us."⁹

"¹³ And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow with them."

Exceedingly beautiful and affecting is this blessing of the dead, thus suddenly introduced with the patience of the saints under the temptations of Babylon and the Beasts; like that of Ecclesiastes, "Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive."¹ But here it rises into the blessing of the Gospel, confirmed by the voice of the Spirit, the faithful Witness. It is *written*, as fully established. And we may observe the remarkable expression, not "follow after them," but with that Divine emphatic language of the Apocalypse, which is wont in an apparent verbal inaccuracy to veil a sacred mystery, "*follow together with them.*" Not to the Judgment-day only, as long after to be produced—but continue and abide with them until that day—being now inseparable from them.² For works done form a part of the soul's character. Even now in their waiting are "given unto them the white robe" (chap. vi. 11), which is "the righteousness of saints" (chap. xix. 8); that in it "they should rest."

"Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."³

⁹ 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

¹ Eccles. iv. 2.

"Thy works and alms, and all thy good endeavour,
Stay'd not behind."

³ Isa. xxvi. 20.

SECTION XII

THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE

CHAP. XIV. "14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting, like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come *for thee* to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

The Reaper descending on the "*white cloud*" with the "*golden crown*," and with the "*sickle in His hand*," is one of the most striking visions of *the Son of Man* in the Apocalypse; and one which, like the others, of itself intimates the whole description that follows. The picture is itself a parable:—the golden-crowned Reaper on the symbolic cloud, and that cloud illumined by the presence of the Son of Man seated thereon, as on His throne!

We had the first-fruits in the beginning of this chapter, "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb" on Mount Sion; and now we have the Pentecostal ingathering, or the harvest, in this beautiful vision. And further, as if in continuation, in the preceding verse we had the rest of the saints, departing in peace, and their works following together with them, and now we have the end, the reward of the righteous. In the golden crown we recognize at once "the Lord of the harvest," Him of Whom it is written, "Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon His head."¹ "The golden crown," says Ecumenius, "expressing the kingdom of Christ, and the sickle His

¹ Ps. xxi. 3.

authority to end the world. For the harvest, as He Himself says, in the Gospels, is the end of the world." "On the cloud," says Aretas, "as the chariot of God." "White," as the colour which, ever in the Apocalypse, denotes His Presence. Tichonius takes the white cloud for the Church shining forth in her brightness after the flames of persecution; and the crown, as the golden crowns of the twenty-four elders. And the sickle, as separating the Catholics from heretics, the saints from the sinners, as the Lord saith unto the reapers.² But there appears here no separation: it is not that harvest of the Gospel where the angel-reapers separate the wheat and the tares; or, rather, it expresses one clause only of that Parable, "Gather the wheat into My barn;"³ and that of the Baptist, "He will gather the wheat into the garner,"⁴ leaving the other for a separate parable ensuing.

"*The angel*" coming "*out of the temple*," and calling aloud to our Lord Himself to "*thrust in the sickle*," seems to express the Old Testament, and the fulfilment of what is there written: indeed this command itself is in the Prophet, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down."⁵ For our Lord states it as the reason for His own conduct on more than one occasion, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."⁶ But Aretas says, "It is the supplication of the powers of Heaven for the reward of the just." Bede considers it "the Church, with great desire praying the Lord to hasten His kingdom." It is very remarkable how, throughout the economy of the Incarnation, our Blessed Lord takes mankind into co-operation with Himself, waits for, and asks for their active participation and sympathy. "Pray ye the Lord of

² Matt. xiii. 41.

³ Matt. xiii. 30.

⁴ Matt. iii. 12.

⁵ Joel iii. 13.

⁶ Matt. xxvi. 54; John xix. 28.

the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest,"⁷ as, though needing their aid, for what was not to be done without them. And hence also He calls forth the voice from the Old Testament: for "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets."⁸ He clothes Himself, as it were, with His prophets and saints when He goes forth.

"*The harvest is ripe*," Bede explains to be, "that iniquity aboundeth and love waxeth cold, the earth ceaseth to be green; that the ripe grain fall not to the ground, for the elect's sake He shortens the days." Judgment first begins at the house of God. The good are taken, the evil left. The harvest precedes the vintage. The righteous are called into the kingdom prepared of the Father: and then the wicked are sent away into condemnation. The sheep are set on the right hand, then the goats on the left. The wise virgins enter in to the marriage supper; the foolish are afterwards rejected. The elect are sealed of God and numbered, and then follows the destruction of the temporal Israel. The good are called out of Sodom, out of Babylon, out of Jerusalem, then the vengeance follows.

It is questionable whether the harvest and vintage here are of the final Judgment, or some previous coming of Christ. Ancient interpreters, as Aretas, Ecumenius, Tichonius, Berengaudus, Bede, St. Gregory, and together with them, Cornelius à Lapide, consider it as the last Judgment. Our own writers, as Mede, Hammond, and Woodhouse, apply it to some prior fulfilment. There can be no doubt but that it is intended to represent the final separation of the wicked and the good; but the description has throughout a remarkable analogy with the account hereafter of the great contest at Armageddon, to which all

⁷ Matt. xi. 38.

⁸ Amos iii. 7.

things are tending, as will be seen by comparing it with the 19th chapter. The circumstances described seem purposely connected by a variety of expressions, and the order in which they occur. There is the judgment of the Harlot, corresponding with the fall of Babylon here ; and followed in both by the smoke of their torment ascending for ever ; the expression is in one, "Blessed are the dead in the Lord ;" in the other, "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper ;" in the former, "their works do follow them ;" in the latter, "they are clothed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints." The marriage supper of the Lamb corresponds with the harvest ; and the going forth afterwards of "the Word of God with a garment dipped in blood," and the slaughter that ensues, is the vintage and wine-press ; which is intimated by the remarkable expressions at the end, where, as by a designed connection, in one case the figure of the wine-press passes into that of an army of horsemen, with the blood reaching to the bridles of the horses ; in the other the army of horsemen terminates in the figure of the wine-press.⁹ The prophet Joel is the basis of the description in both cases, where the same event is expressed by the two different figures : there is the "putting in the sickle" and the "fats overflowing," together with the "men of war," the "multitudes in the valley of decision."¹ The wine-press and the battle are in like manner combined in the passage of Isaiah, "Red in apparel as one that treadeth the wine fat," is blended with the "blood-stained raiment" of "the day of vengeance."² The descriptions of the Apocalypse, in both cases alike, are but vivid expansions of the two prophets.

Moreover, the going forth of the Word of God in the latter case, and the battle that ensues, being after the fall

⁹ Conf. xiv. 20 ; xix. 15. ¹ Joel iii. 9, 12, 13. ² Isa. lxiii. 3.

of Babylon, marks it as coinciding with this. The fall of Babylon seems connected with the end of the world; inasmuch as it is the preparation for it. Even here again the Old Testament supplies the figure, and the order of events. In the prophet Jeremiah, "one post shall run to meet another" to declare the fall of Babylon; it is then added, "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come."³

"¹⁷ And another angel came out of the temple, which is in Heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, having power over the fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. ¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

In this case of the vintage the appeal is still stronger than that to "the Lord of the harvest" before. "It is not a loud voice here," says Aretas, "but a *loud cry* implying intensity, like the cry of Sodom." And it is to be observed, that it is not from "out of the temple" as before, but "*out from the altar*" itself that this angel comes, crying for judgment. From "under *the altar*," in the fifth Seal, is the prayer of the martyrs before the destruction of Jerusalem; and because of "the prayers of all saints" the judgments of the Trumpets go forth. And this angel is said to have "*authority over the fire*," as the fire from the censer kindles those former judgments.⁴ "The fire," says

³ Jer. li. 33. ⁴ Rev. viii. 5 and 3; and see page 267.

Andreas, "is for the end of the world;" Aretas and Bede, for the punishment of the wicked.

The former angel with the sickle was "like unto the Son of Man," but in this of the vintage there is no mention of the Son of Man either in gathering of the grapes or in treading the wine-press. Neither is there the "white cloud," nor the "golden crown." The *angel* here implies the ministers of His vengeance; it is in the prophet Joel in the plural number, "Put ye in the sickle." Bede considers Christ Himself to have the sickle of the harvest and also of the vintage; He sowed the good seed; He planted the vine on the fruitful hill; and in both, he thinks, a discrimination between good and bad. And, indeed, St. Augustin on the Psalms speaks of the wine-press as separation, like the winnowing of chaff from wheat.⁵ But in this case it is expressed by "*the vine of the earth*," not the vine of Heaven. The harvest is of the good; and the vintage of the reprobate, as understood by Berengaudus and others. There appears to be no separation made in either case; or at all events, if there be a distinguishing, it is in the harvest alone. "The Lord deigns not here," says Aretas, "to make a choice, as to gather some into His barn and cast the chaff into the fire; but from the excessive nature of the wickedness the angel casts them at once into the wine-press of the wrath of God; admitting not of defence or question." "*The vine of the earth*," he says, "in distinction from that vine which He had brought out of Egypt; and from that true Vine which our Saviour deigned to call Himself, and His apostles the branches." "The grapes of the vine of the earth," says Ecumenius, "by which the unholy and lawless are characterized, who fill the cup of the Lord's anger, whose fruit, which they

⁵ In Ps. viii. 13.

have borne to the good husbandman, instead of the wine of gladness, 'is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.'⁶ Indeed the vine occurs, in Scripture, in two senses, "the true vine," the "pleasant plant on the fruitful hill;"⁷ and there is also the vine of Sodom, "whose grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters bitter." There is the false and true vine; the Harlot and the Bride; and one passes into the other as it were imperceptibly.⁸ There is the wine of gall offered to Christ; there are the grapes of Eschol, carried from the Holy Land, as intimating that the iniquity of the Canaanites was full.

If it be asked why the Vintage and the Wine-press should be of evil in this Parable, it may be on account of Christ's atoning Blood shed in vain; and this may be the reason for its being brought on by "*a cry of the angel coming out from the altar*," and not, as in the former case, from the "angel out of the temple."

Indeed "treading the wine-press" is the Scriptural figure of wrath and punishment. Thus, in this place, *Thrust in thy sickle, for her grapes are fully ripe*, is an expression from the prophet, and must be understood in connection with the prophet himself as the expositor. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe," . . . "the press is full, for the wickedness is great."⁹ And another prophet, "The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press. For these things I weep."¹ But more particularly is it the carrying out of the sublime appeal in Isaiah, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?"² As the army of Heaven on white horses is but the development of the single Horseman on the white horse of the first Seal; so this treading of a

⁶ Deut. xxxii. 33. ⁷ Isa. v. 7. ⁸ See Jer. ii. 21; and Isa. v.

⁹ Joel iii. 13.

¹ Lam. i. 15.

² Isa. lxiii. 1-6.

vast multitude carries out the wine-press of the prophet, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."

It is marked as of wrath alone, for it is "*without the city*," i.e. the city of God, as afterwards (chap. xxii. 15) "without are dogs." Our Lord Himself "suffered without the gate," as bearing the curse of sin,³ and our reproach. Whereas the dead bodies of the Witnesses are expressly within the Holy City.⁴ These are without, as by the Law shut out from the city of God. It is expressly "*the great wine-press of wrath*." "Great," says Cæumenius, "on account of the multitude of those that are tormented in it; for broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction." "Tophet is ordained of old, He hath made it deep and large."⁵

St. Jerome⁶ supposes the 1600 furlongs to be the length of the Holy Land; the local and temporal Israel, from Dan to Beersheba. But more probably its signification is in the mystery of numbers; and St. Jerome in the same Epistle speaks of "the truth of history as the foundation of the spiritual understanding." It seems to have some reference to the number of the Beast, the Six and Six hundred: whereas the Holy City is by Twelve: "the city lieth four square—twelve thousand furlongs."⁷ Four multiplied by itself is sixteen; but multiplied by the hallowed Three it is Twelve. Tichonius takes it to signify "all the four parts of the world, the fourfold with its multiple, (*"quaternitas est conquaternata;"*) as in the four faces quadriform and entire: for four times four hundred," he adds, "is the thousand and six hundred." Indeed the fourfold face might imply diversity of character,

³ Heb. xiii. 12.

⁴ Rev. xi. 8.

⁵ Isa. xxx. 33.

⁶ Epist. cxxix. Dardan.

⁷ Rev. xxi. 16.

and the hundred might represent many individuals, and these again multiplied by the four quarters of the globe would form the number. Bede adopts the same explanation as Tichonius. Again, as four we know is of the whole world, so forty is the period of suffering. Perhaps it might be the forty of suffering multiplied by itself;⁸—the fulness of woe.

Here, therefore, we come to the termination of all things and pause. The visions again begin to traverse the same periods with another form of prophetic description. This continual hurrying to the end, and then breaking off, as it were, with a pause; and then bringing all things again suddenly to an abrupt conclusion, is surely very striking: it has in it something awful and mysterious. "For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."⁹ The last Day thus constantly is mentioned in Scripture with some illusion to a sudden and unexpected termination.¹

Hence that recapitulation after the Sixth which commentators notice in the Apocalypse. For the Six is the fulness of time, after which the pause ensues.

⁸ Deut. xxv. 3.

⁹ Rom ix. 28.

¹ See pp. 183, 204, 205.

PART IV

The Trials ; or, Judgments of God

SECTION I

THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

CHAP. XV. “¹ And I saw another sign in Heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. ² And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³ And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* Thy works, O Lord, the God Almighty: just and true *are* Thy ways, Thou King of nations. ⁴ Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For *Thou* only *art* holy: for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments have been made manifest.”

IN like manner as the 144,000 of the Sealed, before the destruction of Jerusalem in the seventh chapter, appeared again in the last chapter (chap. xiv. 1-5), together with the Lamb, having overcome the Beast, and “harping with their harps,” so there appears a like correspondence here with the palm-bearing “multitude which no man could number,” which had “come out of the great tribulation.” Such are these which here “sing the song of the Lamb.” They are in both cases like successive stages more fully

developed as time advances. In the former case the emblem is that of the numbered Israel; in the latter that of the nations.

Again, in the vision of the fourth chapter, we had the “*sea*” in Heaven;¹ before as “*of glass*” only, now “*of fire*” also, from the trials of these last days: they are the waves of the Red Sea, which appear on fire as the Sun of Righteousness arises upon them, on the margin of which the true Israelites sing the song of Moses, and the saving Lamb. “We went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.”² It is as the sea of vast multitudes, transparent as known of God, and purified as by fire. “The water and the fire of the Spirit,” says Bede, “or red with martyrdom.” Or, it may be, as those who have been “baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” While the vials are poured on the wicked, they “are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.”³ They have escaped from Egypt and Pharaoh—out of the fourfold trial—the *Beast*, and his *image*, and his *mark*, and his *number*. They are “more than conquerors through Him that loved” them—not *over*, as our translation has it, but rather from the Beast—they have vanquished by flight (*i.e.* ἐκ τοῦ θηπίου), escaped from the net of the fowler. “The snare is broken, and” they “are delivered.”⁴ They have been true to God, having no other God but Him; they have been faithful to His *Image*, which is Christ; and have overcome by His saving *mark*, which is the Cross; and have been true to His *number* in the sanctification of the sevenfold Spirit, and kept holy the true Day of the Lord. They give glory to Him for His *marvellous* salvation; for *the song of Moses*

¹ See pp. 64, 65.

² Ps. lxvi. 11.

³ Wisdom iii. 1.

⁴ Ps. cxxiv. 6.

has become *the song of the Lamb*. He is no longer the King of Israel, but the "*King of nations*." "The song of Moses and of the Lamb," Tichonius interprets of the Old and the New Testament.

"⁵ And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was opened in Heaven. ⁶ And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. ⁷ And one of the four Living Creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

Mingled with every visitation of judgment and woe, and antecedent to it, we have noticed throughout the Apocalypse that we have the vision of the Blessed. The same scene here occurs, as preparatory to the plagues that follow, and indeed as instrumental towards them. *The seven angels having the seven plagues* are introduced in close connection with that company in Heaven. The intercessions of the saints precede the movement of God's judgment. The seven plagues are like a fulfilment of the Prayer, "For the blasphemy wherewith they have blasphemed Thee, reward Thou them, O Lord, sevenfold into their bosom."⁵ The whole subject touches on the imprecations in the Psalms, which are especially intended, it is thought, for the days of Antichrist; and seems connected with that awful, incomprehensible mystery, that the righteous shall finally acquiesce in the everlasting punishment of the wicked. For here not only do the saints acquiesce in these judgments, but take part in the same; they are brought about by their prayers; they are accom-

⁵ Ps. lxxix. 13.

panied with their songs of thanksgiving. As every judgment before was preceded by a Divine call, so here we have the Vials, or hallowed bowls⁶ of incense offering, which are "the prayers of the saints," filled with God's wrath on the impenitent. Such were the effects of the prayers of Elijah on idolatrous Israel; such, of the intercession of Moses and Aaron upon Egypt. The altar cries for vengeance (p. 96); the sacerdotal censer of the atonement brings judgment; the sacred rod of Moses causes the plagues, though it set forth the redeeming Cross. The outstretched hands of Moses, which represented Christ interceding in His death, brought destruction on Amalek. It is on the Holy of Holies being opened; it is out of the sanctuary where the ark of the testimony was, that the angels proceed; attired as the High Priest and as Christ Himself (pp. 16, 17); seven, as it were, sacerdotal angels representing the Church. It is one of the four Living Creatures, the Cherubim, in God's Presence, the Evangelist of the Mercy-throne, that gives the Vials to the angels. The sweet odour of incense is unto death. Thus Bede says, "that the same Vials contain sweetness of supplication and wrath of punishment, when the saints pray for the coming of God's kingdom. For we are a sweet savour of Christ in those that are saved and them that perish." "The incense," says Tichonius, "is the wrath and word of God. All these give life to the good; inflict death on the wicked; as is that saying, 'to one the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.'⁷ For the prayers of the saints, which are the fire going forth from the mouth of the witnesses, are wrath on the world and on the wicked."

⁶ *φιάλαι*. 1 Kings vii. 50; 1 Macc. i. 20, LXX., in both with "the censers of gold."

⁷ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

There seems indeed great reason for connecting these seven Plagues with the Two Witnesses ; which are the saints against which the Beast makes war and prevails (chap. xi. 7). It may be a matter for consideration whether the prayers of the Two Witnesses may not be these Vials of incense. Tichonius supposes that the fire which will descend from the Two Witnesses will be the occasion of these plagues, or connected with them. This similarity, indeed, with the Two Witnesses may be that of analogy only ; and it might be supposed that their infliction is for correction, these for reprobation. But yet the period of their duration seems equivalent to that of Antichrist, and therefore must comprehend that of these plagues ; and they are similar in their effects ; indeed the turning waters into blood is like the third Vial ; the stopping rain is of the nature of the fourth. Aretas suggests that even these judgments of the Vials were for amendment, for it says they repented not, as if repentance had been the object of them. And it might be added that neither did the judgments of Moses and Elijah produce reformation, but hardness of heart and impenitence. It was stated that they hated the Witnesses who tormented them. Here they blasphemed God who had power over the plagues. And power of the plagues was also attributed to the Witnesses. This account may be the same thing differently described ; or an expansion of the former ; and differing perhaps in depth and intensity. They are the "*fulness of the wrath of God ;*" and occur on the veil being rent and the Holy Place fully opened in the seventh Trumpet. The seven Seals are the judgments of God on Jerusalem ; the seven Trumpets on the Church of God ; the seven Vials on Antichrist and the world. It is remarkable that Babylon is not mentioned under these seven plagues, as if reserved

for a separate judgment. Babylon is not found to be specified where the second Beast or false Prophet occurs. Or it may be that, as these are judgments on Antichrist, so far as Babylon is connected with Antichrist, or in league with him, she will necessarily partake of these plagues ; for in those things in which she sins, in them will she be punished throughout all these judgments.

And now the shrine is opened which it was death to a stranger to approach ;⁸—they are “no more strangers, but” of “the household of God.”⁹ Nor is it again closed, though inaccessible for a time from the awful Presence of God’s glory in the cloud, and His wrath in the smoke ; “as indicating,” says Bede, “the hidden and impenetrable secrets of God, till His judgments on the wicked are completed, when ‘the Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness.’”

In the murmuring of the children of Israel “the cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared ;” but the plague which then began was stayed by Aaron, with the censer, and the incense, and the fire from the altar.¹ But here, on the contrary, it is from the censers and priestly incense the plagues themselves go forth, as indicating their irremediable nature, beyond the reach of atonement. And through all these visitations God is awfully present in His Church, so that “*no man was able to enter into the temple.*” “The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud.”²

It will be observed that the ten plagues of Egypt form the basis of the description. Egypt represents the world. The difference is that here they go forth from the Church, from the temple, the sacerdotal ministers, the sacred cen-

⁸ Num. iii. 10.

⁹ Eph. ii. 19.

¹ Num. xvi. 42–46.

² 2 Chron. v. 14.

sets ; and are Seven instead of Ten. "*The wrath of God filled up,*" seems to indicate that they are on the wicked past recovery.

SECTION II

THE SEVEN VIALS

CHAP. XVI. "¹And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the *seven* vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

It has been stated that "one of the four Living Creatures" gives "the seven Vials of wrath to the seven angels" (chap. xv. 7). A still closer connection with these four Living Creatures was found under the Seals : for the four first Seals are each connected with that sacred Four. This seems to intimate that the Gospel itself, as represented by those four cherubic emblems, has some relation to these prophecies in the history of the Church. Again, it may be further noticed that the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials contain, for the most part, the same imagery, under each number, viz., the earth, the sea, the fountains of water, the heavenly luminaries. Further, as connecting the Gospel itself with the visible creation, we observed (in chap. xiv.) that the angel conveying to the world the everlasting Gospel, proclaims aloud to fear God, as the hour of His judgments hath come, "and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and sea, and the fountains of water."¹ This seems to connect the Gospel and the coming Judgments with these emblems, as referring to Him by whom they were made ; and we find that they are for the most part images taken from the history of the creation, according to the number of the

¹ Rev. xiv. 7.

day. This seems to afford some clue to their mysterious meaning.

Add to which, that the plagues of Egypt appear to have been upon the objects of their idolatry—the Nile, the frogs, the cattle—inasmuch as they saw not the Creator in His creatures, “but worshipped the creature more than the Creator.” But the miracles which Moses and Aaron wrought on the Egyptians, the magicians worked, for a time, and in some degree; while God made a division, and separated the land of Goshen.² Thus the idolatry of the creature may in some degree give that satisfaction and rest which is to be found in God alone, but only for a time.

And Antichrist shall in like manner work miracles, as if the natural world belonged to him, but not to deceive the elect. The things of nature are now called upon to carry out the dispensation of the Word of God. It seems to set forth in a striking manner the very opening of St. John’s Gospel, as telling us Who it is that comes as Judge. He clothes Himself, as it were, if one may so speak, with His own creation, as He visits rebellious man. “Was Thine anger against the rivers? was Thy wrath against the sea, that Thou didst ride upon Thine horses and Thy chariots of salvation? The mountains saw Thee, and they trembled. The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation. Thine arrows walked in light.”³ Living energy and dramatic form is given to this imagery of the prophet.

From the ten plagues in Egypt we turn to the curses pronounced under the Law, where we find it stated that

² See Aug. Ex. Quæst. xxvi. vol. iii. 677.

³ Hab. iii. 9–11.

Israel, on its disobedience, shall be visited "with the botch of Egypt," and "all the diseases of Egypt."⁴ And the curses consist in the good things which God hath given being converted into evil, "Cursed shalt thou be in the city; and cursed shalt thou be in the field," and the like. So is it under these Vials, that the great creatures of God, the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, moon, and stars, created by Him and denoted as such by the order in which they come, created for all mankind, become to them evil, because in them they worship not their Creator. Therefore, as in the plagues of Egypt, these things are represented as being evil to them, and the very instruments of their punishment. It is not from the Law, but from the Gospels, from the four Living Creatures, that these curses go forth. "The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." The creatures He has made come forth in this the dispensation of His Gospel, to avenge the cause of their Creator—the Son of Man.

And if, as St. Augustin says, the ten plagues had a reference to the Ten Commandments, the seven Vials would likewise to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and to the seven deadly sins which have set them at naught; a return to the idolatries of the seven nations of Canaan, which they had once cast out;⁵ the seven other spirits having entered into the house more wicked than the first; the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness in this world or in that which is to come. For there is no repentance in these plagues, no hope of amendment.

This seven expresses what is full and final: "If ye will not hearken unto Me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." And again

⁴ Deut. xxviii. 27-60.

⁵ Deut. xii. 30.

repeated, "I will walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins."⁶ They are seven, "because" in them is "filled up with wrath" (*ὅτι ἐν αὐταῖς ἐτελέσθη*, xv. 1).

After the boils on the Egyptians, Moses proceeds to speak of the plagues sent by God "on the heart,"⁷ as if that was intended in the outer sign. And as the blessings on Israel have been found to have a spiritual interpretation, either as alone and altogether beside the literal one, or together with it; therefore it may be concluded that there are in these vast fulfilments in the spirit as well as in the letter. "All things"—all creatures—"work together for good to those that love God;"—all come forth as His avengers on those that love Him not. St. Augustin supposes all the ten plagues capable of an allegorical interpretation. This is shown at length in a sermon attributed to him.⁸ And Tichonius takes all these plagues as entirely spiritual wounds on the soul; and not only that, but supposes they will exist with great external prosperity, which will add to the evils of their souls, while men rejoice in self-seeking and take pleasure in sin. "All these plagues," he says, "are spiritual, and take place in the soul. For at the same time all the wicked will be unharmed by all bodily plague; as deserving not to be scourged in the present world; but they will be sores of the soul, voluntary and deadly sins." Although there is no sufficient authority for this last supposition, of these plagues being connected with temporal prosperities, which may be the case or not, yet it suggests to one how extremely mysterious the whole subject is; for they will come as a snare on all that dwell on the earth, there will

⁶ Lev. xxvi. 21-24.

⁷ Exod. ix. 14.

⁸ In Ps. lxxvii. vol. iv. 1188. Serm. xxi. Appendix, vol. v. 2355.

be something in all these things different from anticipation. Those two great types, the deluge and the destruction of Sodom, were preceded by prosperity to the last. Add to which, that Israel had a dispensation of temporal promises : but the spiritual Israel in Christ crucified, has its Beatitudes connected with external states of suffering : its Woes with secular joy, reputation, and ease. St. Paul speaks of affliction as the mark of Christ Jesus, which He bore about in the body ; the mark of the Beast may be the opposite to this.

As philosophical speculations of magnitude are best pursued by particular observations on a limited scale, and close home application ; so the way of ascertaining the meaning of these plagues would be to notice the progressive effects of infidelity on the heart and practice ; to see how far such may be expressed by these successive symbols according to their usual acceptance in Scripture ; and from thence to deduce some data for a course of analogy, which may be further traced in the history of the world at large, as affecting whole nations and successive ages in the gradual development of consequences. For the judgments of God would probably be in accordance with such moral laws. For instance, it might be considered whether the first grievous and noisome sore from the mark of the Beast might be found in that leprosy of soul which breaks out on the first rejection of God. This extending in the second plague turns Baptism itself into spiritual death ; and from thence, in the third plague, to hatred of those which bring the waters of life ; until the very knowledge of Christ in the fourth plague becomes an oppressive weight of light and heat. This might afford a clue to the historic fulfilment. There seems a gradual increase in the intensity of these evils, as of mercy con-

tending with judgment. "Executing Thy judgments upon them by little and little, Thou gavest them place of repentance, not being ignorant that they were a naughty generation, and that their cogitation would never be changed."⁹

SECTION III

THE FIRST VIAL

CHAP. XVI. "And the first went and poured out his Vial upon the earth; and there came a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image."

The *first Vial* is poured forth *on the earth*; "the earth" we have often found to be the earthly Israel, out of which came the two-horned Beast. Under the *first Seal*, the Word of God went through the land of Judea, "the cities of Israel" first to be preached unto, "conquering and to conquer;" the true Light, whose type was created on the first day. And under the *first Trumpet* the fire from the altar was east on *the earth*, and the trees of the forest were laid low. But now, for Christ rejected, the Word of God made man, the great Healer of body and soul denied, and the Destroyer acknowledged, the Egyptian plague is fulfilled "on the *men which had the mark of the Beast, and which worshipped his image*;" the "boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast," "upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians,"¹ with the mysterious intimation, "I will send My plagues upon thine heart." The heart of Pharaoh is hardened by God Himself. There is no repentance. This the *first* plague is "*upon men*," because of Christ, the Son of Man,

⁹ Wisdom xii. 10.

¹ Exod. ix. 11-14.

rejected by man for Antichrist. But it is the sixth plague of the Egyptian plagues, because the number Six is always of Antichrist. On the magicians themselves was the boil.

As, therefore, the first Seal was the calling of the Israelites that had the seal of God on their forehead, with the sore judgments that attended the Son of Man on the impenitent Jerusalem, and the first Trumpet the calling out of the true Israel of God from the ruins of Israel and of Rome, so are these last judgments now, in order to bring out the elect from the falling of the kingdom of Antichrist. "As the first Trumpet," says Berengaudus, "was on the third part that is the elect, this is on the reprobate; the grievous sore on those who, being rendered worse after the preaching of the saints, have despised the commandments of God." "It is," says Bede, "of the heavier punishment awaiting those who have heard the preaching of the Word, but repented not." As our Lord says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." This boil is as the plague that was on the Philistines because the Ark of God was among them, and they revered it not.²

As "the earth" and "the sea" are so often put for Israel and the nations, it seems probable that this Vial is poured on those in the Church, or those Christians who had worshipped the Beast or his image; and corresponds with those cases in the Israel of old, when those who were secretly or openly guilty of idolatry in the sacred nation were thus spoken of, as infected, and denounced of God for idolatry. Thus the "Beast from the earth," or one connected with religion, endeavours to produce this effect, the mysterious worship of evil; for the mark of the Beast or the mark of Christ will distinguish good and bad

² 1 Sam. v. 9.

Christians. And this differs from the Beast "from the sea,"—from open infidelity and avowed Antichristian powers. Perhaps some subtle spiritual deceit. It is judgment beginning at the House of God. The Cup first given to Jerusalem, then to Egypt.³ Nor, it may be observed, is it so overwhelming: it is not, as it were, altogether unto death, but a "*grievous and noisome sore.*" The expression is as of those in Israel whose knees had bowed unto Baal, and whose mouths had kissed him;⁴ on those lapsing from the Faith.

"The mark of the Beast," says Berengaudus, "is pride." "Absence of the love of God," says St. Athanasius. Perhaps "lawlessness" from "the lawless one," which will be multiplied from love failing.⁵ Ecumenius speaks of it as a spiritual plague or sore on the soul of apostates; though, he adds, it might likewise have an outer sign of bodily infliction. The "loathsome disease,"⁶ the "putrifying sore,"⁷ the "running issue,"⁸ the leprous plague spot,⁹ are the Scriptural language for the soul's malady. But not necessarily connected with the spiritual evil it represents. Certainly these Antichristian contenders against Christ's Cross bear in their bodies, and in themselves the wounds—the plagues of their own hearts, with which they go perhaps to their graves. But impenitence is not stated in the first Vial.

³ Jer. xxv. 15-29.

⁴ 1 Kings xix. 18.

⁵ ὁ ἀνομος, 2 Thess. ii. 8; διὰ τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν, Matt. xxiv. 12.

⁶ Ps. xxxviii. 7.

⁷ Isa. i. 6. ⁸ Lev. xv. 4-15.

⁹ Lev. xiii.

SECTION IV

THE SECOND VIAL

CHAP. XVI. “³ And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*; and every living soul died in the sea.”

This *second Vial* is on the *sea*, as was the *second Trumpet* (see p. 141). And still further, the *second Trumpet* was of the *sea* converted into *blood*; and this *second Vial* is of the same, but with fulness and intensity added to the awful image. The *second Seal* also was of *blood*, as signified by the Red Horse; but that might have spoken of the blood of martyrs,—this cannot be so; that, moreover, was on the land of Judea,—this is on the *sea* of the nations. It is the first of the Egyptian plagues of the Nile becoming blood, but “the river hath become a sea;” that on Egypt was partial, this general; that on Egypt was the sign, but the fulfilment of this is in the thing signified.

The change into *blood* may be of war and bloodshed, even the battles of Gog and Magog, as Aretas suggests. Thus in St. Luke are the expressions combined, “distress of *nations* with perplexity, the *sea* and waves roaring.” But it seems rather of spiritual death among the nations. It is *as the blood of a dead man*; that we mistake it not for that Red Sea through which the redeemed are brought,—the baptismal death unto sin through Christ’s life-giving Blood. This is remarkable; it is not the Blood that saves, as of Him who “liveth and was dead;” it is not the blood of martyrs, who in dying live unto God. But this is of blood like that of a *dead* limb separated from the

body, or that of a corpse, which the Law had stamped as abomination, the curse of sin portending a second death. As the "noisome sore" in the preceding Vial was a mark of legal uncleanness, so is now *the dead* man. And as to mark it still more strongly from the second Trumpet, wherein "a third part" only died, it is added, *every living soul died in the sea*. The "soul" might imply that natural animal soul which is contrasted with the spiritual life; the "living soul" which is from "the first man,"¹ contrasted with the "quickenings spirit" which is of the second Adam. It is the soul which partakes of the first Adam. Such, at all events, are those that die. It is as the sea of Sodom, the Dead Sea.

This is the fulfilment of the *second* day of the Creation,—the dividing of the waters from the waters,—the *sea* of *blood* below, and the "sea of glass mingled with fire" above, on which are standing the harpers of God. It is of people divided, of "them that have gotten the victory over the Beast," and of the vast unnumbered armies of Antichrist. The *sea* in Scripture seems to be emblematic of multitudinous power for evil or for good; it speaks of the knowledge of God filling the earth "as the waters cover the sea," and likewise of those many waters on which sits the mystic Babylon. The voice of God is "as the sound of many waters," both in His judgments and in His mercies. The *second* is of division; for it is Baptism which divides. Baptism in effect becomes twofold; either regeneration unto life, or as the Red Sea that buries the Egyptian host.

¹ ὁ πρῶτος ἀνθρώπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, 1 Cor. xv. 45: πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζῶσα ἀπέθανεν, Rev. xvi. 3.

SECTION V

THE THIRD VIAL

CHAP. XVI. "4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Righteous art Thou, O Lord, which art, and which wast, the Holy One, because Thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink! They are worthy. 7 And I heard *the angel of the altar* say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Thy judgments."

The *third Angel* pours his *Vial* on the *fountains of waters*, which on the *third* day of Creation had been given to flow to their own place; and the voice of the Angel that carried the everlasting Gospel in mid heaven (chap. xiv. 7) spoke of His judgment Who created "the fountains of waters," the Word by Whom all things were made. It is He Who not only sent forth the four streams of Paradise from that one fountain-head; but also "the living waters that go out from Jerusalem;"¹ "the fountain that shall come forth from the house of the Lord;"² "the rivers of the flood" which "made glad the city of God." And what are these but the Holy Scriptures? *The fountains of waters* the Scriptures, and *the rivers* the doctrines that flow from them; those holy waters from the house of God, of which it is said, that "every thing, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live."³ This is confirmed by referring to the judgment on the waters under the *third* Trumpet, which corresponds with this visitation; for there the falling star of Arianism turns to wormwood the pure fountains of the Scriptures, becoming

¹ Zech. xiv. 8.² Joel iii. 18.³ Ezek. xlvii. 9.

bitterness without the salvation of God which is in Christ. But now they are converted, like the river of Egypt, into blood. "The streams and fountains," says Aretas, "being corrupted, from whence else could they quench their thirst?" It is worse than that plague of bitterness, for the rivers of life have become death to them. The things that should have been to their wealth are unto them an occasion of falling. "That they might know, that wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished."⁴

Or it might be that the waters of life are the occasion of bloodshed; they "turn again and rend" those that bear them. Thus Berengaudus: that "when the holy Prophets have announced the Word of God to an impious people, but they rendered worse thereby, have not only despised the commandments of God, but have also slain His ministers; and this turning into blood is, that they bring on themselves everlasting death." This is confirmed by what follows.

For attention is arrested under this Vial by the solemn exclamation of "*the Angel of the waters*" acknowledging the just judgment, and followed by the Angel "*out of the altar.*" The expressions refer to what has gone before under the fifth Seal. There the Saints of the Old Testament say, "How long dost Thou not *judge* and avenge the *blood*?" Here their complaint is answered by *the Angel of the waters*, that is of the Scriptures: "*Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast*"—the God of the Old and New Testament, "because Thou hast *judged*" and avenged the "*blood.*" And to mark the reference more closely, it is "*out of the altar*" that the second Angel answers, "*Even so, Lord God, righteous are Thy judg-*

⁴ See Wisdom xi. 18.

ments." That *altar* from *under* which the Saints had cried under the fifth Seal. The blood of His Saints required by the Lord of the Vineyard in the parable;⁵ and now in its fulness and consummation. Aretas speaks of the Angel from the altar as Christ. Perhaps we should rather take *the altar* itself to signify that it is for the testimony of Christ these Saints have suffered. Antichrist has been spoken of as warring against the Saints, and of slaying the witnesses (chap. xiii. 7 ; xi. 9), and this is the judgment upon him.

It may have some allusion to Babylon; for the previous passage with which it seems connected in the fifth Seal refers to the visitation about to ensue upon Jerusalem, the city which had slain the Saints, to which character the harlot city of the mystic Babylon seems to have succeeded. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword;" she takes the sword, for she sheds blood; she is destroyed by the many horns of Antichrist.

Further, "*they have shed blood, and Thou*" in Thy righteousness "*hast given them blood to drink*," this may have a reference to the previous Egyptian type; for they had slain the infants by casting them "into the river," and had in consequence those waters of life "turned into blood."⁶

SECTION VI

THE FOURTH VIAL

CHAP. XVI. "⁸ And the fourth angel poured out his Vial upon the sun; and *power* was given unto him to scorch men with fire. ⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the

⁵ Mark xii. 9.

⁶ Exod. i. 22; vii. 20. See also 2 Kings iii. 20-22.

name of God which had power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory."

The *fourth Vial* is on *the sun*; as *the sun* was created on the *fourth* day; and as *the sun* was stricken under the *fourth* Trumpet. The sun is the well-known symbol of our Lord Himself in the Incarnation. In the fourth Trumpet it is connected with the moon and stars; and its being smitten is the withdrawal of Christ's light in that visitation, the spiritual darkness which preceded Mahometanism. But in this *fourth Vial* there is neither moon nor stars, neither Church nor Saints, but the sun with no genial but burning heat. At the fall of Jerusalem the sun became as a sackcloth in the sixth Seal; but here his intensity is increased, and his rays inflict suffering. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" (chap. vii. 16), is the safety of the blessed. The creatures become evil to evil men, and even the Presence and attributes of God. Christ revealed but not loved. "Our God is a consuming fire,"¹ a "jealous God." His Presence was pain to evil spirits. The Pillar of light in the wilderness overwhelmed the Egyptians. He will be revealed as lightning. The tribes of the earth shall look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn. It is in reprobation: "*they blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory.*" Knowledge of Christ established as the sun in Heaven; but in systems of rationalism, socialism, and spiritual republicanism, the Author of life and healing is held in blasphemy; is no consolation, nor restoration, but burns up in doctrines of death, even as belief of the evil spirit walking in dry places, parched and burnt up, and finding no rest. Light without love. The sea and

¹ Heb. xii. 29.

the rivers are turned into blood, the sun burns, life itself is as death. "The truth held in unrighteousness,"² and therefore unto condemnation. "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness."³ It would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for Capernaum, because the Sun of Righteousness was there ; worse for Jerusalem than for Sodom, for they had the Light of the Lamb. It may be of the times of which Daniel speaks, "knowledge shall be increased," "but the wicked shall do wickedly."⁴ They are "tormented in the presence of the Lamb" (chap. xiv. 10). "Vident intabescuntque."

St. Gregory says, "When the sun is put figuratively in the Sacred Scriptures, sometimes the Lord is designated by it ; sometimes persecution ; sometimes the showing of some visible manifestation ; but sometimes the understanding of the wise." After adducing instances of the three former senses, he brings forward this passage as an example of the last, and explains it to signify, that "the wise shall be overcome, and the weak, influenced by their example, be burnt up by temporal desires ; for the ruins of the strong give increase to the perditions of the weak ;"—"that they who appeared to shine in the Church with the light of wisdom, then either taken by persuasions, or frightened by threats, or broken by tortures, will be subjected to the commotions of that Leviathan." "And, therefore, every one, even now, of the wise and learned, who, for the gain or glory of temporal life, subjects himself to worldly powers who act wickedly, prostrates himself under the steps of the coming Antichrist. 'For the rays of the sun will be subject to him.' The Behemoth humbles to himself, as it were, the light of Heaven, whilst he treads

² Rom. i. 18.³ 2 Peter ii. 21.⁴ Dan. xii. 4-10.

under foot the minds of the wise through pestiferous assent.”⁵ This admirable exposition of St. Gregory will be found not incompatible with the view before expressed.

SECTION VII

THE FIFTH VIAL

CHAP. XVI. “¹⁰ And the fifth angel poured out his Vial upon the seat of the Beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. ¹¹ And they blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

It does not appear where “*the throne of the beast*” is; but we find that when he is first described (chap. xiii. 2), the dragon has “given him his *throne*.” It is therefore the throne of the dragon himself. The kingdom of Satan was in the heathen idolatries; this throne he has relinquished, and given it to the Beast, who, in some other secret mode, is enthroned in that kingdom. This throne is usually explained of Rome,—either heathen Rome with Dr. Hammond, or Christian Rome by Mede and others. But we cannot, without authority, limit an interpretation in itself so vast; nor is it anywhere mentioned that this is the mystic Babylon; we cannot, therefore, suppose it to be so, whatever connection there may exist between the two. Of the Church of Pergamos, it is said that she dwells where “the throne of Satan is,” and “where Satan dwells,” but it is not said that hers is Satan’s throne.¹ It has, of course, a reference to the Egyptian plague of darkness which we find was on “all the land of Egypt,”—in express distinction from the dwellings of the

⁵ In Job, lib. xxxiv. In cap. xli. On “Sub ipso erunt radii solis.”—Latin version.

¹ Rev. ii. 13.

children of Israel ;² the same, therefore, seems carried out in this Vial, and expressed by *the throne and kingdom of the Beast*, as being a supernatural darkness confined to that alone. The darkness which God makes—that night in which go forth these two wild beasts of the great desolation.³ “Nevertheless Thy saints had a very great light.” “Thou gavest them a burning pillar of fire, to be a guide of the unknown journey, and an harmless sun.”⁴

Aretas says, that as the expression “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” is equivalent to Thy kingdom, so we must take this for the kingdom of the Beast ; yet the terms are not altogether equivalent ; the *kingdom* of the Beast is here mentioned after his *throne* ; both are spoken of. But it may, perhaps, be here intimated, that in point of time, the period of this Vial is the more entire reign of Antichrist ; and this may assist us towards defining the period as connected with other descriptions of this book ; for if so, it may be the time when, after the destruction of Babylon, the Ten Kings give their power unto the Beast ; and the great light of the last (or fourth) Vial, may be the Angel that declares the fall of Babylon, by whose presence all the earth is lightened (chap. xviii. 1) ; the fall and judgment of Babylon being itself contemporaneous with the third Vial, with which there is much to connect it. And after this fifth Vial, or the reign of the Beast, ensues the sixth Vial, with the preparation of kings of the East, being the army on white horses. Our Lord, after speaking of His Presence being “as the lightning,” adds, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened ;”⁵ where His Presence “as the lightning” may correspond with the

² Exod. x. 23.

³ Ps. civ. 20.

⁴ Wisdom xviii. 1–3.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 29.

fourth Vial, and with that Angel by which the earth is enlightened, and the subsequent darkening of the sun and moon with this fifth Vial. For the fourth Vial is full of light, the fifth Vial is full of darkness. Then the sixth Vial would be the "sending forth" and "gathering of the Elect."⁶ The mysteriousness of both is implied in the uncertain time; in the Gospel, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man;" here by the remarkable insertion, "Behold, I come as a thief" (chap. xvi. 15).

The fifth and sixth Vial appear to correspond with the coming out of Egypt. There is the darkness, as it were, on the throne and kingdom of the Beast; and the first-born are smitten, "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne." Then the sea is dried up for the children of God to pass. And the spirits of devils sent from their mouths are like Egypt pursuing with chariots and horsemen to the great battle and overthrow. Then is "the salvation of God" and deliverance of Israel which ensues.

Again, as numbers are so mysteriously interwoven together, so there appears some kind of resemblance here with the *fifth* Trumpet. For there "the sun was darkened by the smoke that ascended from the well of the abyss" (chap. ix. 2). Both are of Satan's working; one from the bottomless pit; the other on the throne of him who comes from thence. In both are darkness and wounds. The one apparently of Mahomet; the other of Antichrist himself.

After the seventh Vial it is said that Babylon comes into remembrance before God, and her judgment is afterwards described, but there is no intimation when that judgment takes place; except that we know her fall is before that of Antichrist, which must be in or before the

⁶ Matt. xxiv. 31-36.

seventh Vial. Throughout these descriptions we must bear in mind the saying of Victorinus, "It is not," he observes, "the order of the sayings which is to be looked to, for oftentimes the Holy Spirit, when He hath run through to the end of the last time, again returns to the same times, and supplies those things which He had spoken less fully. Nor, in the Apocalypse, is the due order to be sought for, but the understanding." Thus the fall of Babylon, though mentioned subsequently, may be here included.

It might be inquired in what this darkness consisted. Aretas speaks of it as "the excess of sorrow which seems to itself to be in darkness." But it seems more than this, an absence of spiritual light; that "darkness and shadow of death" of which Scripture speaks. The Egyptian plague of supernatural darkness was a figure of this: and many of the eloquent reflections on that darkness in the Book of Wisdom might be here well applied.⁷ And no doubt it is the forerunner of that outer darkness of which our Lord speaks; on being shut out from the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; where the self-reproach is expressed by the "gnashing of teeth,"⁸ which is here implied by their *gnawing their tongues for pain*. "Over them was spread an image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them: but yet were they unto themselves more grievous than the darkness."

Pains, as of bodily anguish, are incidentally intimated, but it is not here stated that a part of this Vial was the infliction of "*pains and sores*:" they may have a reference to the first Vial; and which occurring again here and connected with the darkness, seems to mark them more strongly as stings of conscience,—the pains of the undying

⁷ See Wisdom xvii. 2, 3, 5, 11, 14, 20, 21. ⁸ Matt. xxii. 13.

worm : in effect the same as the scorpion stings under the fifth Trumpet.

That they *repented not* is added, as of Pharaoh, in order to point out the irremediable nature of this plague ; and of the coming on of worse judgment hereafter. Whenever, in individuals, in nations, or in churches, there are visitations without repentance, it indicates something worse in store. Their "*blaspheming the God of Heaven*" is certainly like the heathen attributing the sufferings of their falling Roman empire to Christ and the Christians, of which St. Augustin speaks in the *Civitas Dei*.⁹ For "*the God of Heaven*" must be Christ, with whose Gospel these judgments are so connected.

As darkness and pain are rather in this life the portion of the good, and promote godly sorrow unto life, it might appear as if these were the darkness of sin, blindness of heart, and spiritual wounds unfelt by sinners. As Tichonius says, "the sores of souls are prosperity in evil," . . . "not in body but in soul are they stricken with those plagues of God : wherefore they remember not God, but become worse ; and blaspheme, persecuting His saints." "And *gnawing their tongues from pain* is that they injured themselves in blaspheming, by the anger of God."

Yet "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," they are well content with that darkness of the understanding. It may be then that this is that "plague of the heart," that "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,"—it being the reign of Antichrist. It is supposed to have been in figure of this that "an horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham" when the fowls of evil wing came down.

⁹ "Ortum est vulgare proverbium : Pluvia deficit, causa Christiani."—Lib. ii. cap. iii.

“And it came to pass that, as the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and there passed a burning lamp between the sacrifice.”¹ Of this Job speaks, “A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death;”² of this the Psalmist, “Let their way be darkness and slipperiness;”³ and Isaiah, “Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people;”⁴ and Jeremiah, apparently of this night of Antichrist, “Before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains;”⁵ and Joel, “A day of darkness;”⁶ and Nahum, with great power, “Darkness shall pursue His enemies.”⁷ The Egyptian plague which Moses prophesied on disobedient Israel, “Thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness;”⁸ and as Isaiah says of the wicked, that “he putteth darkness for light, and light for darkness.”⁹ According to all these one would think it must be spiritually explained, and our Lord Himself points and interprets the figure, “If the light within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”¹

SECTION VIII

THE SIXTH VIAL

CHAP XVI. “¹² And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. ¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the

¹ Gen. xv. 17. Aug. Civ. Dei, xvi. 24.

² Job x. 22.

³ Ps. xxxv. 6.

⁴ Isa. lx 2.

⁵ Jer. xiii. 16.

⁶ Joel ii. 2.

⁷ Nah. i. 8.

⁸ Deut. xxviii. 29.

⁹ Isa. v. 20.

¹ Matt. vi. 23.

whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. ¹⁶ And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

We now come to a place of awful interest connected with others by the number *Six*; by "*the river Euphrates*;" by armies of evil and of good. It would appear throughout the Revelation as if there were a secret gathering of armies, as for some great war or *battle*; as it appears from time to time, from the single mysterious Horseman in the first Seal, to the calling of the fowls of heaven "unto the supper of the great God" (chap. xix. 17). "For the Lord God hath a sacrifice by the river Euphrates."¹ But there are many enquiries to be made. "*The great river, the Euphrates*," is the river of Babylon. It is dried up for the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. It is connected with the people of God. Thus it is said, "I will plead thy cause," *i.e.* of Jerusalem, "and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up."² It seems also to refer to the passage through the Red Sea, as appears distinctly in Isaiah, "The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel when He came up out of the land of Egypt."³ It is that fulfilment which Zechariah describes, when God shall bring back His people, when the sea of Egypt and the river of Assyria are both spoken of as dried

¹ Jer. xlv. 10.

² Jer. li. 36, 37; and l. 38.

³ Isa. xi. 16.

up for a way for them, and from both places they come.⁴ To the same effect is that eloquent and beautiful passage of Isaiah, He "that hath made the depths a way for the ransomed to pass over. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head."⁵

But the chief question is, Who are these *kings of the East*? If the army with which they have to contend be those Antichristian powers which are unbound from "*the river Euphrates*" in the *sixth* Trumpet, and are here described under the "*unclean spirits*" collecting *the kings of the earth* for the battle of the great day of God; then we may infer that these are the faithful with Christ. They who are described afterwards on white horses, attending Him Who is then spoken of as "King of kings," and has "on His head many crowns" (chap. xix. 12, 14, 16): those who attend His coming like the outgoings of the eastern morn: the "kings" who "shall come to the brightness of His rising;"⁶ of which the Magi were the first faint types or first-fruits. We may include in some sense the opinion of Mede, that they are the Jews at last; it is the coming of the true Israelites to the true Jerusalem of which Scripture has said so much. The whole of this battle will be found hereafter, as the great fulfilment of Ezekiel (chap. xxxviii. xxxix.).

Not only is *the East* itself a name of Christ,⁷ but the use of it has an especial reference to His coming in His kingdom. Thus we have had (in chap. vii. 2) the Angel who has the Seal of the Living God coming from the East, or "the Rising of the sun;" where the expression is the same as in this place. Berengaudus speaks of coming from

⁴ See Zech. x. 10-12.

⁵ Isa. li. 11.

⁶ Isa. lx. 3.

⁷ See Hammond on Rev. xvi. 12.

the East as coming from Christ Himself. This would correspond with the evil armies as sent by their chiefs. "They," he says, "who come to Christ, come from Christ; He gives them to come, and when they come receives them." If the East, so also must Euphrates and Babylon be mystical emblems.

We cannot, therefore, be too cautious against confining all this too much with time and place; from the going forth of the Word on the White Horse in the first Seal; and the full gathering of the armies of evil under the sixth Trumpet, and now coming to their consummation. It seems to be in some way connected with the mysterious and sudden coming of Christ Himself, as the 15th verse intimates; for occurring so remarkably and so incidentally it seems to say, "Think not of this as of some great battle, a scene on which you are gazing, in which you are yourself unconcerned; you are yourself, O reader, now in the midst of that conflict of which you read!" It is the lesson throughout and warning. Mention had been made of the "*great day of God Almighty*," which gives rise to this most striking admonition.⁸ He is cautioned to *keep his garments*, and if these are in some sense those "armies in Heaven" "in linen white and clean," he that is addressed is of that army of Christ. But the parenthetic sentence of warning clothes itself in altogether another figure, "*Blessed is he that keepeth his garments*," &c., in the language of the prophets, as in Jeremiah: "For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered;"⁹ and in Isaiah, "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen. I will take

⁸ See pp. 5 and 44.

⁹ Jer. xiii. 22.

¹ Isa. xlvii. 3.

vengeance.”¹ An awful allusion to the great manifestation of secret sins. And then the warlike imagery is again resumed.

The previous Vial was full of darkness, the midnight of the reign of Antichrist, but in this is seen as it were a streak of Eastern light dawning upon that night: the Coming from the rising of the sun. But only faintly alluded to, for all the Vials speak of judgment.

The *unclean spirits* are all alike, as they are all *like frogs*, yet from different sources as *from the dragon*, and *from the beast*, and *from the false prophet*. They seem to imply the pouring forth of wickedness of every kind, from the devil, and the world, and from that spiritual wickedness which usually attends on both. The threefold power indicating too intensity and multitude, as the myriads of that army under the sixth Trumpet, stirring all the nations to fight against God. Like the threefold repetition too, there thrice occurring, of “the smoke, the brimstone, and the fire;” and the horsemen, their horses, and their serpent tails. As affecting Christians under the sixth Trumpet, they were as scorpions; but as Christ is now to appear in this war with His saints, they tread under foot the serpents; and they harm them not, but are as *frogs*, *κόρακες ὄς, ἄκραντα γαρνέμεν*.² As *frogs*, powerless indeed against Christ and His elect, but nauseous, foul, and innumerable, as set forth in that plague of Egypt: *unclean spirits* going forth in this the night of Antichrist, the evening of the world, wallowing in impure lusts. And loud too and vain, as St. Augustin explains it, “rana est loquacissima vanitas.”³ “Frogs,” says Aretas, “as of harsh noise, tumultuous and clamorous, frequenting mud and dirt, as the lives of sinners, and opposed to the

² λάβροι παγγλωσσία, Pind. Ol.

³ In Ps. lxxvii.

stern life of the friends of God, the hymns and songs of thanksgiving by which they magnify Him."

The dragon is introduced as keeping in memory that old enemy of man and as intimating, says Aretas, "the crooked movements of those wiles by which he at first beguiled in Paradise." It may be that before this season he had given his power to the Beast (chap. xiii. 2), while he himself appeared not, that this period may be the same as that afterwards described as Satan being loosed, in this the reign of Antichrist. For when he could not succeed against the Woman who had taken the eagle wings to the wilderness, or her "man child," it was stated that "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away, ἀπῆλθε, to make war with the remnant of her seed;"⁴ after which he seems to disappear, until now he again comes forth. "*The Beast*," as Antichrist himself, "with the eyes of a man," that accumulation of evil so long foretold, the whole world of infidelity, deceiving and being deceived. "*And the false Prophet*," or second Beast, as representing that deluding subtlety which Scripture describes as characterizing "the Man of Sin;" coming with all "deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish," and the mighty working of delusion, the ἐνέργεια πλάνης,⁵ the "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."⁶

The *mouths* are here again as before emphatic; the going forth from the *mouths*, the *mouths* thrice repeated; and the frogs which are all mouth.⁷ A peculiar force and power is now seen in those words, from the extensive and rapid inculcation of evil which the press affords: a meaning to the word "*mouths*" beyond what could have been conceived when the Apocalypse was written.

⁴ Rev. xii. 17.

⁵ 2 Thess. ii. 11.

⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

⁷ See p. 166.

If, as it evidently seems, this should be the same as that going forth of Satan unchained (chap. xx. 8), "to deceive the nations in the four quarters of the earth, to gather them together to battle," these must be the forces of "Gog and Magog." And here it is emphatically said it is for "*the great day of God Almighty.*" It is "the great and notable day," says Aretas, "of which the prophet Joel speaks; which shall bring forth into the light the things done by each. And they go to war against those who in fear of this day, perseveringly uniting, have taken part with God, from the time when they put on the garments of salvation, and the robe of gladness, which are those godlike virtues that shine forth and gladden the inner man." "*Blessed,*" therefore, "*is he that keepeth his garments,*" on account of that coming, unexpected and unknown.

There is great doubt raised about the meaning of "*Armageddon,*" but according to our usual method of referring to the Old Testament, it is simple and easy. "*Megiddo*" is mentioned in the song of Deborah as the place of battle with the kings of Canaan:⁸ but, more particularly, it is the place where the good Josiah died in battle against the king of Egypt.⁹ And the passage here refers to the prophet Zechariah, who, in speaking of this last coming of Christ, likens it to that great event of mourning in the valley of Megiddo.¹ It is said that the word in Hebrew signifies "excision, or the destruction of armies."² The historical interpretation is more in keeping with the Apocalypse than the etymological; but the mention of the word expressly *in the Hebrew* seems to refer us also to the etymology. And Aretas alludes to this its

⁸ Judg. v. 19.

⁹ 2 Kings xxiii. 29.

¹ Zech. xii. 10, 11.

² See Hammond.

meaning of excision, or cutting off, as a cutting off from God's grace, and that final excision which is spoken of, "that Evangelical cutting off and 'giving him his portion with the hypocrites,'³ and that separation from God in death of which David speaks; 'for in death no man remembereth Thee.'"⁴ The same writer has this reflection on the gathering to a place, "That he who is thus prepared through the whole time of this life is dwelling apart from earthly things, and inhabiting another Jerusalem; that as that Jerusalem is encompassed with mountains, so he, by lofty and heaven-ascending thoughts, unceasingly has his mind above." This individual application is evidently what Holy Scripture here intends. "The great day," says Tichonius, "is sometimes put for the day of Judgment; sometimes for the last persecution, which is to be under Antichrist; sometimes for the whole time from the Passion of the Lord." The last he considers it in this place.⁵ This is not, it must be observed, the battle of Armageddon, but, as in the sixth Trumpet, the gathering of armies, and preparation for it.

We shall indeed be involved in inextricable confusion, unless we clearly keep in mind the nature of Christian and spiritual warfare, and remember how perfectly distinct it is from those fulfilments of prophecy in the Old Testament, where the strong line of demarcation consisted in an outward sign, as of circumcision; or of local distinction, as of the Holy Land, and Amalek, Tyre, and Egypt, and the like; whereby, as with clean and unclean animals, was set forth the broad line which will finally exist between the righteous and the wicked; but in Christian warfare, in the accomplishment of spiritual prophecies, this cannot be so; and to suppose it is to return to

³ Matt. xxiv. 51.⁴ Ps. vi. 5.⁵ As Amos v. 18.

Judaism. For how can a whole people, ranged under one banner, with national or local distinctions, or under obedience to the kings and captains of armies, be all, without exception, children of perdition, and of the evil one, and opposed to a visible and local "camp of the saints," where the material rampart shall inclose a "people all righteous." Every thing of this kind is to confuse things spiritual with the corporeal types; as if the influences of Satan were to be so shut out, and the operations of the Good Spirit confined to time and place in the Christian kingdoms. But above all—this mode of interpreting prophecy is to put far from ourselves that which is most intimately near, and to look upon a conflict in which we are ourselves engaged, as a scene at a distance, that interests us only as a striking picture.

SECTION IX

THE SEVENTH VIAL

CHAP. XVI. "17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great."

"*The seventh angel*" pours "*his Vial into the air*," the seat of Satan, as St. Paul says, "the prince of the power of the air."¹ Thus the devil is cast into the lake after the Beast and false prophet.² The expression, "*It is done*," seems to refer to our Lord's dying words on the Cross. And St. Athanasius has reflections on our Lord's Passion which may apply to this place, "The Lord in

¹ Eph. ii. 2.

² Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10.

compassion for man died not on the ground, but ascended up into the air through the Cross, pursuing there the serpent, that from thence also He might thrust down the prince of the power of the air, and cast down spiritual wickednesses. For when He hung upon the Cross He purified the air by the stretching forth of His hands."³ "On the air," says Aretas, "from whence is all pestilential corruption, in which the lightnings shine and the thunders sound. And from the heavenly temple the voice came, corresponding with the type appointed with Moses in Mount Sinai." The earthquake, says the same writer, "is the changing from things corruptible;"—"for never yet hath been such a change of the corruptible world into the incorruptible and eternal." It is that great movement of which St. Paul speaks from the prophet Haggai.⁴

"¹⁹ And the great city was divided into three parts; and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. ²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹ And there fell upon the men a great hail out of Heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great."

One would have thought the 19th verse to have occurred here parenthetically for what had taken place under the former Vials, were it not that the *dividing* asunder of a *city* seems connected with the earthquake. There seems, as in the imagery of the 20th verse, a decided reference to the sixth Seal, which was the destruction of Jerusalem and the calling from thence of God's elect; as now from the fall of Babylon, which precedes the consummation of all things. But where the same figures occur it may be

³ De Pass. et Cruc. Dom.

⁴ Heb. xii. 26; Hag. ii. 6.

observed how they increase in force. The *mountains* and *islands* in the sixth Seal were "moved," now they take wing and are "*no more found*."⁵ The use of the same emblems under the Seals or Trumpets, indicate warnings and monitory signs of these last judgments on "*the great city*." Aretas says, "Some have supposed these things to be spoken of Jerusalem, great, not in the multitude of its inhabitants, but for the sufferings of Christ, and the things that there occurred. And hence it is distinguished from the other cities, which Scripture calls those of the nations." "But the time of Antichrist's coming will more clearly manifest." "Nor were it unreasonable to take the great City to mean the present world." Neither of these opinions is admissible; but the truth, for which this writer was seeking, will be found as reconciling and unfolding both of these suppositions, viz., that it is the Christian Church, or the Christian world, if so it may be called.

The same writer speaks of "*the great Babylon*" as being the ancient Rome, in which the holy martyrs suffered. "It cannot," he adds, "be all the world, for it is distinguished from the islands that are afterwards spoken of. Or else," he says, "the new Rome, under Constantine, in which 'righteousness lodged, but now murderers.'"⁶ This expression is remarkable, for he does not mean the Church, whereas those words of the Prophet were spoken of the ancient Israel of God. Not inconsistent therefore with this opinion may we conclude it to be an adulterous Church.

The "*three parts*" into which the great city is divided seems of itself to indicate judgment on the Christian Church, inasmuch as the number three and a third part seems to mark the judgments on the Church under the

⁵ See pp. 101-103.

⁶ Isa. i. 21.

Trumpets, in distinction too from the Vials or visitations on Antichrist. The same threefold dividing is of Jerusalem.⁷ The question of doubt is, whether "*the great City*" is altogether identical or co-extensive throughout with the "*great Babylon*." In this passage it would appear not to be so.⁸

"*The great City*" here spoken of as "*divided into three parts*" seems to be the same as that of which it is said in the 11th chapter, that "a tenth part of the City" fell at "the great earthquake;" it there appears to be the same City which had been spoken of throughout that chapter, first of all as "the holy City," and afterwards as "the great City in which the Lord was crucified," and thirdly, as "the City." St. Jerome maintains that the great City there said to be "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" cannot be the local Jerusalem, which even after our Lord's death is called by St. Matthew "the holy city,"⁹ and had been ever since venerated by apostles and saints, but that "the great City" must mean the world.¹ But all these difficulties can only be satisfactorily explained by harmonizing the two conflicting statements, it is the holy City defiled, the great City, either a wordly Church or the Christian world. St. Jerome in the same Epistle says of the descriptions of "the great City," the "new Jerusalem," in the Apocalypse, that "all these particulars are to be understood spiritually."² We apply this principle to both cases.

The "*great hail*" and "*hailstones*" we often find in the prophets as indicating the indignation and judgment of God, and, indeed, especially coming in the consummation of it. In some cases apparently predictive of these

⁷ Ezek. v. 2-12.

⁸ See p. 192.

⁹ Matt. xxvii. 53.

¹ Ad Marcell. Epist. xvii.

² See pp. 191, 192.

last judgments.³ And perhaps more especially in the prophet Ezekiel, to which there is such frequent reference in the Apocalypse. Even introduced in solemn apostrophe, "And ye, O great hailstones, shall fall."⁴ Coming in the midst of thunderstorms, with such accompaniments, they appear to express, in a manner most forcible, judgment from Heaven, as if they had no other object but as the language of Divine displeasure. Like Heaven open and pouring down wrath. It may here express what Daniel says of this time as, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation."⁵ The great tribulation beyond all.⁶ It would seem as if *the Vial into the air* was the entire suspension of all, the utter overthrow of Satan. For nothing is there stated, but *all is finished*. In this pause there follows as usual the recapitulation.

³ As Isa. xxx. 30.

⁴ Ezek. xiii. 11.

⁵ Dan. xii. 1.

⁶ Matt. xxiv. 21.

PART V

The Vision of Babylon; or, The Unfaithful Church

SECTION I

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT

CHAP. XVII. “¹ And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven Vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon the many waters: ² With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

AFTER the seventh Vial, Babylon is spoken of as not forgotten in the Lord's anger; where she is mentioned as “the great Babylon,” and apparently distinguished from “the great city” and “the cities of the nations.” One of these *seven Angels* of judgment now points out her who, under the seven Vials, was not marked out by any peculiar designation; for under this description of “*the great Whore*,” Babylon occurs, as it were, incidentally, as an additional name. The judgment upon her being shown by one of the seven Angels, seems to indicate that it was during the outpouring of those Vials that her judgment took place.

The whole account of the Harlot,—the judgment, the name and the figures by which she is characterized,—is

little more than bringing out into distinct mention the descriptions in the Old Testament of Israel and Judah,—more especially of the latter, as the Bride or Wife which had become adulterous. The basis of the whole description will be found in those two most pathetic and striking chapters of Ezekiel, the sixteenth and the twenty-third; but it is the usual and acknowledged figure in the Prophets for the Sacred Nation. The term “adultery” is never applied to a heathen kingdom; that of “harlot” never as an appropriate designation, or as descriptive of a general name and character, and only twice as an incidental expression;—as to Tyre,¹ whose singing on her restoration is compared to that of “a harlot;” and to Nineveh, “whose dominion was the sea, and the water her walls;”² whose “whoredom and witchcrafts” are mentioned. It is evident from the Old Testament, that by the term “*the great Harlot*,” is meant, not the world at large, nor any infidel city, but a Christian Church;—the Jerusalem dwelling below; “the great City,” “the great Harlot;” nay, more, “the Mother of Harlots.”

But the question may be asked, Why is she called an harlot, πόρνη, rather than an adulteress, μοιχαλὶς? The reason appears to be, in order to keep up more closely the connection with the Old Testament, where the former word is used as applied to Jerusalem of old, as may be seen throughout the above-mentioned chapters of Ezekiel, on which this vision is founded, where the term occurs throughout in frequent repetition, especially in the former chapter. Moreover, in that and other places of the Prophets, it is equivalent to adultery; and the subject referred to is unfaithfulness to her first espousals³ to God, and to

¹ Isa. xxiii. 16.

² Nahum iii. 8. LXX.

³ Jer. ii. 2.

His love and care of her.⁴ Again; an adulteress would imply one instance of unfaithfulness; but in these cases there is infidelity "with many lovers,"⁵ which is the case throughout with the Jerusalem of the Prophets (as may be seen especially in the Prophet Hosea), and with "*the Great Harlot*" of St. John. There may be further a difference in the meaning of the two words. The term translated adultery simply signifies defilement; but the other expression, selling herself for hire (*πόρνη*, from *πενάω*, *vendo*), which idea pervades the whole of this subject; the impure Church barter and prostitutes her faith to Christ for the advantages of the world; the gold and the silver, the glories and delicacies of the world, are especially dwelt upon; and for these she sells herself to kings, great men, and merchants. The word "Adulteress" would be here very weak compared with that of "the Great Harlot;" the term would be altogether feeble and inadequate. It may be added, that attention to the single passage on Tyre, where the expression occurs, will, I think, leave the impression that the mysterious resuscitation of Tyre, after she has "been forgotten,"⁶ has some close connection with the prophecies that afterwards occur in this book, where so much has a reference to the Tyre of the Prophets. As the old Babylon which had "been forgotten" "comes a remembrance before God,"⁷ so likewise is the lost Tyre revived.

A consideration of this subject throughout the Prophets will convince any one that the expression "Harlot," applied to Babylon, is the very key to the whole as spoken of the Israel of God. Again, if the Church passes imperceptibly, without any express intimation of the failing of first love,

⁴ Hosea ii.

⁵ Jer. iii. 1.

⁶ Isa. xxiii. 16.

⁷ Rev. xvi. 19.

into the character of Babylon, so is it in the Old Testament with the introduction of Sodom and Gomorrah ; the holy people are suddenly changed in God's sight, into "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah ;"⁸ so here are they lost in Babylon. We shall, moreover, afterwards find that this "Harlot," from the fate that she ultimately meets with, is a Priest's daughter.⁹

St. Jerome, on the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, allows that what is there said of Jerusalem must be referred to the Church. "For if Jerusalem, according to the Apostle, is the mother of us all, and our mother is the Church, it follows that Jerusalem is the Church, the mother of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven." And, of course, the ancient Jerusalem is the very foundation of all the Apocalypse from the first chapter, where the Temple service affords the imagery of Christ's Presence, to the City of God in the last chapter ; it is interwoven throughout ; all is a carrying out of the Jerusalem of the Law and the Prophets ; all is fulfilled ; "not one jot or one tittle passes away."

The fornication of ancient Judah was "with stones and with stocks ;"¹ that of "the Great Harlot" is with the kings of the earth, as opposed to fidelity to her true King, the Lord's Anointed ; some spiritual idolatry in a heart that goeth away from God. It may be observed that where a heathen kingdom, as Babylon, is represented as a woman, as throughout the forty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, the idea of *fornication* does not there find place, it is "the virgin daughter of Babylon." But no sooner is Babylon mentioned in the Apocalypse, than her "fornications" are spoken of, and she is never separated from that character of adultery or whoredom. Again, if it be the case that

⁸ Isa. i. 9.⁹ Lev. xxi. 9.¹ Jer. iii. 9.

"enchantments and sorceries" are attributed to the ancient Babylon, "the Lady of Kingdoms," yet it is expressly on account of spiritual deceits.²

This has also been shown by the close connection of Babylon with the second Lamb-like Beast; they both perform in some measure, though by different means, the same office, beguile by their seductions to worship the Beast. Babylon is characterized by a cup of enchantments; the second Beast deceives, and comes with all deceiveableness. As in the Prophet Hosea the priesthood are as "a net spread upon Tabor;" and then comes "the spirit of whoredoms;" "Ephraim committeth whoredom, and Israel is defiled."³

Again, a similar connection is found between Jerusalem and Babylon as between Babylon and the Lamb-like Beast. In Jerusalem lie the bodies of the Witnesses; in Babylon is found the blood of all the saints. Antichrist "makes war against the Witnesses" in Jerusalem, "and overcomes them;" and also "makes war" in the parallel passage "against the saints," "and overcomes them" (chap. xi. 7; xiii. 7), as if both were the same. Again; "Antichrist," say St. Irenæus and other Fathers, "will reign in Jerusalem;" but also in the same manner is Babylon in other places spoken of by them as his capital; therefore, this Jerusalem and Babylon must be either the same, or nearly so, as figures of a Christian Church; both are "the great City."

Lacunza, the Jesuit, very well explains it: "The love of Jerusalem to her Spouse waxed cold; she forgot what she was, and said within her heart, 'We shall be as the nations.' Now if there be another Jerusalem, the Spouse of God, another beloved one, still better beloved

² Isa. xlvii. 12.

³ Hosea v. 1-4, and vi 9, 10.

than the first ; and if this new Jerusalem should become cold in her love, and careless of her obligations ; if she should be notorious for her commerce, not with gods of wood and stone, but with the kings of the earth ; and He to whom she had been betrothed should, by one of His prophets, give to this the name of fornication, what should we by this understand but the same thing in substance ?”⁴

In the Jerusalem of the Prophets it is evident that these adulteries, and her being as Sodom and Gomorrah, did not break off the promises made to her, nor take away the inheritance of the true children of Abraham. Her high privileges that she had “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises,” and the coming of Christ “as concerning the flesh.”⁵ These were not cut off, but preserved in her faithful remnant, led on to their true fulfilment. “This evil and adulterous generation,” our Lord said of them ; yet, also, “salvation cometh of the Jews.” Thus throughout the Prophets there are bound up together as it were two Jerusalems : the one an adulteress, worse than Sodom, “laden with iniquity,” filled with abominations, with “hands full of blood ;” her sons “the seed of the adulterer and the whore,”⁶ “the children of the devil.” The other a “holy nation and peculiar people,” “the chosen seed,” “the mountain of holiness ;” her sons “all righteous.” Even after our Lord’s death it is called by St. Matthew “the Holy City :” though filled with iniquity and laden with the curse of God, yet was it “the Holy City” from Christ’s presence in His Church, which lodged there.

And hence is formed the second of Tichonius’s seven rules of apocalyptic interpretation. “That the Lord’s Body is twofold ; or rather, as St. Augustin would prefer stating

⁴ Ben-Ezra.⁵ Rom. ix. 4, 5.⁶ Isa. lvii. 3.

it, that there is a true and a counterfeit Body of the Lord. For the Church says, 'I am black, but comely :'⁷ she speaks of herself as both, on account of the communion of sacraments, and the temporal intermixture of fishes, good and bad, within the same nets. For the 'tents of Kedar' appertain unto Ishmael, who 'shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.'⁸ It is Israel constrained to dwell in "the tents of Kedar."⁹

This name, therefore, does not destroy the sacraments and the promises given to the Christian Church, or the hopes and graces of the sons of God within her. For "how hath the faithful people become an harlot?"¹ were the words of the Prophet, when about to open to Israel the evangelical promises to her keeping consigned. All things, notwithstanding man's unfaithfulness, worked together for good to the establishment of the promises made to the true Israel.

But it must be observed that the Apocalypse carefully abstains from using the name of "Jerusalem" for this false Church, even when describing it as such, through the eleventh chapter, where it is called "the Holy City," and described as defiled except the measured Temple. And here "*the great Harlot*" is spoken of as well known, though not before mentioned, inasmuch as she took so large a place in what had passed.

"*The great whore, that sitteth upon the many waters.*" Although the first words are of a holy people once united to, but now fallen from God, and at ease in the self-confidence of spiritual whoredom; the latter figure is from the Babylon itself of the Prophets. "O thou that dwellest upon many waters."² And, it is to be observed, that here

⁷ Cant. i. 5.

⁸ Gal. iv. 30.

⁹ Ps. cxx. 5.

¹ Isa. i. 21.

² Jer. li. 13.

both the literal and the mystical combined form the picture ; “*the many waters*” of the local Babylon being the many nations under the obedience of the spiritual Harlot. And in this there is a resemblance to the Jerusalem from above, for the voice of Christ therein is “as the voice of many waters.”³ The kings and people being “*intoxicated*” with her seductions as “*with wine*,” is similar to the descriptions in the Prophets of Tyre, of Nineveh, and especially of Babylon ; apparently with reference to idolatry. But here the great force is laid on the word “*fornication*,” which is absent from those accounts of the nations. The “*wine*” of “*fornication*,” as something that “takes away the heart”⁴ and deludes the understanding.

SECTION II

SEEN IN THE WILDERNESS

CHAP. XVII. “³So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness ; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet-colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”

This description is very remarkable, as arresting our attention to an apparent contradiction ; in order to see her who is sitting on many nations he is taken to a place the reverse of all this—“*into the wilderness*.” This is another strong proof that an adulterous Church is spoken of, for “the wilderness” is peculiarly the dwelling of the Church. To the Wilderness the Apostolic Woman had fled, and now we are carried there and see her not, but instead the

³ Rev. xiv. 2.

⁴ Hosea iv. 11.

purple Harlot. Of the Church of Israel, when described as an adulteress who had "decked herself with her earrings and her jewels" and "went after her lovers," it is added; "I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."¹ And, in another Prophet, "I will bring you into the wilderness."² But immediately her dress is such as one would not expect to find there. "What went ye forth into the wilderness to see? a man clothed in soft raiment?" *i.e.* such were most incongruous to the notion of a desert. Yet such is here fulfilled. Of these last days the warning is, "If they say He is in the desert, go not after them:" implying the religious pretence of a false Christ.

The "many waters" on which she sat might have been of the true Bride, but these we now find to be no other than the Beast we had seen before "arising out of the sea" of the nations; she is "*sitting on a Beast, scarlet-coloured.*" It is the same—but now he has become "*scarlet,*" as dyed in blood; and, instead of one name of blasphemy on the head, "*teeming all over with names of blasphemy.*" The distinctive parts of the leopard, the bear, the lion—the Grecian, the Persian, the Assyrian—are seen no more, but fused in the one Beast. The leopard's likeness is not discerned, it is now all "one red;" the pardlike diversity of many nations, the pantheon multiplicity of heathen idolatry, is lost in one all-pervading new character, as time advances, and he comes into combination with the woman in one picture. And the woman, she also is "*clothed in purple,*" the kingly robe of empire; "*and with scarlet,*" as dyed with blood;³ so it is taken by Aretas. And decked all over "*with gold, precious stones,*

¹ Hosea ii. 14.² Ezek. xx. 35, 36.³ Not so in Rev. xviii. 16.

and jewels”—the account given of Jerusalem, the adulteress of old, as things given her of God, but as made by her subservient to her pride.⁴ “And thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper unto a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou didst trust in thy beauty; and playedst the harlot because of thy renown.” “Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of My gold and of My silver which I had given thee.” This taking the riches that God had given her and attributing them to her lovers is also powerfully set forth in Hosea: “For she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread, mine oil, and my drink. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.”⁵

Again; “*the golden cup in her hand*” is of ancient Babylon. “Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine.”⁶ But the “*abominations*” or idolatries with which it is filled are her own. And we must again mark especially that mention is here introduced of her “*fornication*,” which is not in that Babylon of old. Her distinction is of spiritual adultery—Babylon’s golden cup of wine becomes here “the wine of fornication”⁷—as of some peculiar power of enticing in that golden cup: as our Lord said of that former Jerusalem, “Beautiful without, but full within of all uncleanness.”⁸ “The cup of gold,” says Aretas, “as intimating kingly sway; and, in her hand, as the active energy of her ministers.” This account of the Christian Church was seen strongly in Solomon, as

⁴ Ezek. xvi. 11, 13–17.

⁵ Hosea ii. 5, 8.

⁶ Jer. li. 7.

⁷ Rev. xiv. 8.

⁸ Matt. xxiii. 28.

her type, when he to whom God had given riches and honour—whom the Queen of the South came to admire for his wisdom—fell away through strange women into idolatry.

Bede speaks of the “gold and precious stones” as simulation of truth. They occur, we may observe, afterward, in the account of the faithful Bride. It may be added, that our Lord Himself wore the “purple” and the “scarlet” robe. Thus even the two horns of the Lamb in the spiritual Beast are for persecution; it is under semblance of good, such as almost to deceive even the elect. The fact that the New Jerusalem from above is throughout thus decked with costly stones, and gold, and regal array, shows that it is not in these externals that the difference will consist, but in a heart that hath become alienated from God.

“*The golden cup of abominations and her fornication*” Tichonius explains as false and hypocritical Christianity; appearing righteous without, but full within of all impurities. We must consider the word “*abominations*” in the Scriptural sense of idols, as “Ashtaroth, the abomination of the Zidonians,”⁹ and the like; and the term “*fornication*” indicates such idolatry in the sacred people of God. Both as expressed together in the Prophet, “Commit ye whoredom after their abominations? ye pollute yourselves with idols, O house of Israel.”¹ Such “*fornication*” at that time was heathen idol-worship in the Israel of God.² But the question is whether it can now relate to the worship of dead men, that are with God, and their images, or of Christ in a local and circumscribed Presence. The context with the other parts of the

⁹ 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

¹ Ezek. xx. 30, 31.

² Wisdom xiv. 12.

Apocalypse does not indicate this ; nor is it borne out by the New Testament, for when our Lord identifies the well-known "adultery" of the Prophets with Israel, and fastens it on that "generation" as "adulterous," it has no reference to idol-worship : unless it be that such adultery was characterized by the seeking of a sign.³ The "idolatry" spoken of by St. Paul is "covetousness." And the term "abomination" is applied by our Lord to "that which is highly esteemed among men,"⁴ where He also is speaking of covetousness. The generation against which our Lord testified as "adulterous" had no idol-worship, but was worse in His sight than that of their forefathers, which had been called adulterous by the Prophets on account of positive idolatry.

"⁵ And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus : and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."

"*And on her forehead a name written.*" This, as well as the wilderness and the description of an Harlot, is an intimation that it is Jerusalem or the Church of God which is spoken of ; for it evidently refers to the name on the forehead of the high priest, "Holiness unto the Lord."⁵ Thus St. Jerome on the words, "I put a beautiful crown upon thine head,"⁶ in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, says ; "Do we wish to know what the crown is on the head of Jerusalem, we must turn to Exodus." And referring to this signet on the brow of the high priest, he adds ; "The sign of the Lord's sanctification is the name of the Almighty God, which is written by four Hebrew

³ Matt. xii. 39.

⁴ βδέλυγμα. Luke xvi. 15.

⁵ Exod. xxviii. 36.

⁶ Ezek. xvi. 12.

letters, and among them is called the unspeakable name." This also is unspeakable, the "*mystery*" not of godliness, but of iniquity. It is connected with the "mystery of iniquity" of which St. Paul speaks. The name is Mystery. Not a mere figure or allegory, but some deep device of Satan, that cannot be understood or explained, in corrupting the Church of God. And instead of "Holiness unto the Lord," it is "*Babylon the Great, the mother of fornications and the abominations of the earth.*" "How is the faithful city become an harlot! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers."

It is not as Cornelius à Lapide, Woodhouse, and others would understand it, that her name is to be mystically understood; but more emphatic—that her name, the inscription on the sacerdotal brow, is "Mystery," according to the strong power of Hebrew language, as "He shall be called;" and "Thou shalt be called the city of righteousness;" and "The name of the star is Wormwood;" so her very name is "Mystery:" *i.e.* she is so in a singular manner, it is her characteristic. But as the name on the forehead of the high priest was a mysterious secret, so this her character is known to God only, seen in His eyes as "*the Mother of harlots and abominations;*" not so among men, with whom she is highly esteemed. Again; it must be remembered it is not Antichrist, not denial of Christ, not blasphemy that is written on her forehead, but "Mystery" and "Confusion." Whereas the Beast has "on his heads, Blasphemy."

"*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the Saints. And I wondered when I saw her, great wonder.*" The beloved disciple stood amazed—not at wickedness, nor at the effusion of blood, which to him, living under Domitian, could be no object of wonder; dark had already

been his details ; he had eaten of that little Book, and in bitterness understood. But to see a Christian Church shedding blood, this filled him with amazement. It was this most mysterious complication. This would account for the early Fathers saying and knowing nothing on this subject. It was incredible or marvellous even to St. John. It was thus our Lord "*wondered*," not at the sins of publicans, but at the unbelief of His own city, Nazareth. He "*wondered*" at the faith of a Gentile ;—at the nine unthankful lepers of Israel. At the last supper they doubted as in awful wonder of whom He spake,⁷ in amazement because it was one of themselves. They were exceeding sorrowful. This may account also for the sickness and awful depression of Daniel. / And corresponding with the "*wonder*" of St. John is the very name "Mystery."

It is remarkable that on that very memorable occasion they suspected not, but by a strange prophetic circumstance beckoned unto John to ask. It went out from among them, yet was hardly known before the deed was done. The great subject of the Apostasy continued a secret even to the last ; they understood it was one who sat among them, one of them ! He was "troubled in spirit," and they "looked one on another," and began, sorrowful and amazed, to say in doubt, "Is it I?" The very inquiry showed humility and self-distrust, which is the greatest pledge of fidelity. They beckoned unto him to ask who was "lying on Jesus' breast," for such alone are likely to learn of God the secret. It was Peter that beckoned ; it was to him he beckoned who saw the Apocalypse ; he beckoned, distrustful of himself and anxious to know. No, chief of Apostles and the blessed of Christ, it is not thou ! But it

⁷ John xiii. 22.

is one very near, of whom ye think not; it is he who is the last to ask of himself, "Master, is it I?"⁸

It is in speaking of the fall of Jerusalem, that once beloved city—and it is in speaking, not to the heathen city, but to the Church of Rome, that St. Paul says, "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."⁹ Nor can a wealthy hierarchy point the finger, with Bishop Newton, for it is an humble and poor Church, that of Philadelphia, which Christ has promised to keep from the great "hour of temptation which shall come upon the whole world."¹

Further; if the name of Jerusalem is studiously taken away, and that of Babylon is substituted, while the prophecies inserted from the Old Testament afford prominence to the former type, we may find the reasons for this great principle in the two names themselves. Babylon is spoken of by St. Ambrose, by Tichonius, Aretas, and others, as signifying "Confusion." St. Augustin says: "See the names of those two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem. Babylon is interpreted Confusion; Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace. How can we distinguish and separate them one from the other? They are blended together, and continue to run together from the beginning to the end of the world." "The Lord will then show the distinction—when He will place some on His right hand, others on His left. Jerusalem will be on the right; Babylon on the left." "Yet we may adduce something by which the faithful may even now be distinguished. The two affections make the two cities: the love of God makes Jerusalem, the love of the world Babylon."²

It must, therefore, be some wonderful complication of

⁸ Matt. xxvi. 25.

⁹ Rom. xi. 20.

¹ See page 44.

² In Ps. lxiv.; vol. iv. 898.

good and evil in the Church visible, that it should be only known by this name of "Confusion." In the eleventh chapter the Holy City was trodden under foot : in that city "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, and where the Lord was crucified," the seven-headed Beast slays the Witnesses, and that city rejoices over the slain with feastings : the same precisely is now signified by another mode of expression ; that the same city is as an Harlot sitting on that seven-headed Beast, and "*drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus*," thereby crucifying the Lord in His own witnesses and saints : and now no longer Sodom and Egypt, but spiritually called Babylon. In both is Antichrist ; in both the witnesses of Jesus are slain ; in one she revels in joy over the dead ; in the other she is intoxicated with blood.

Aretas, in speaking of the City of Rome as signified by Babylon, adds ; "In all this the prophetic saying is suitable, 'As is the mother, so is the daughter.'"³ But it is remarkable that the proverb which this Greek writer refers to is spoken not of Babylon, but of the Ancient Jerusalem, in that very chapter which forms the basis of this analogy or figure in the Apocalypse. For the inference from that proverb is, that in the Christian Israel will be fulfilled what there is said of the Israel of old. She is a priest's daughter. She is the daughter of Jerusalem. Such are secretly, as St. Gregory and Bede maintain, parts of one and the same body throughout, as our Lord intimates that from the blood of Abel to that of Zacharias would be required of Jerusalem. Thus many religions form one and the same cloak for hypocrisy and cruelty. "It is one and the same body," says Tichonius, "and joined together by one spirit in persecution, whether

³ Ezek. xvi. 44.

persecutors be within or without the Church." It is, indeed, impossible not to be aware that the principle of persecution and hypocrisy is one and the same under different and often opposite forms of religion.

Yet still the expression "*drunk with blood*" is difficult altogether to understand or apply to any fulfilment; the expression is familiar to one from the Old Testament, where we have "drunk" with wormwood, and with bitterness, with affliction, with the cup of trembling; drunk with their own blood; "drunken, but not with wine," "for the Lord hath poured on them the spirit of deep sleep."⁴ But we afterwards find that in her, as in Jerusalem of old, is "found the blood" "of all slain on the earth."⁵ And further; she sits on the Beast that "goeth into perdition," and that not only at the last on the coming of Christ, but as he contains in himself the successive generations of the wicked, so doth he every day "go into perdition" in his members. And to this she ministers. Perhaps it may be as expressed in the feeling and beautiful expostulation of Lacunza, that she is like Jerusalem of old, which garnished the sepulchres of the righteous, and thought not of her alliance with their murderers, while she filled up the measure of their sins. For heathenism, while it sheds blood, is not thereby rendered *drunk*, as in the proud security and intoxication of self-righteousness. For honour to the memory of martyrs and veneration of suffering saints may exist with a self-deluding spirit of oppression; being stupefied thereby, as with wine, and filled with a vain confidence.

But it is particularly to be observed that there is no blasphemy ascribed to the Woman, no denial of Christ, no open impiety. She must not be confounded with the

⁴ Isa. xxix. 9.

⁵ Rev. xviii. 24.

seven-headed Beast or Antichrist. They are perfectly distinct. The Woman cannot be one with the Beast on which she rides.

SECTION III

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST

CHAP. XVII. “⁷ And the Angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the Woman, and of the Beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸ The Beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is. ⁹ And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the Woman sitteth.”

When the Angel comes to explain “*the mystery of the Woman*,” which had occasioned St. John such astonishment, it is rather of “*the Beast*” on which she sits, and by which she is carried, than of herself that he speaks; as if this, her connection with the Beast, was the circumstance which explained “*the mystery*.” It was shown before¹ that this seven-headed Beast is not the fourth Beast of Daniel, as it has been supposed, or the Roman empire, but the four heathen empires combined in one, as indicating universality; he is marked as Antichrist, as the one that “*goeth into perdition*,” and “*cometh forth out of the abyss*” of hell, being the revival of the devil’s throne and kingdom under a new form; the self-dependent infidel principle which magnifies itself against God, and appeared once for all slain by Christ, yet again shall arise and be admired. And therefore Babylon also shall be

¹ See pp. 226, 227.

seen again under a new form, that of the Harlot, that "Lady of kingdoms" once destroyed. "The wise only shall understand." Idolatry under another shape shall prevail as of old. So that St. Paul's account of the heathen world in his Epistle to the Romans is, throughout all its features, a remarkable parallel with his description of the last times in his Epistle to Timothy.² But it may be observed that this is no subject of wonder to St. John; he marvels not at all at the Beast, but much at the Woman. It is twice repeated that all but the elect shall admire and wonder at the Beast.³ To wonder at the Beast is of the wicked, the part of all the unfaithful; to wonder at the Woman, is of the Divine Evangelist himself: the object of wonder in St. John cannot be the same as that of the worldly; this Babylon cannot be the mere seat and kingdom of the Beast.

But if the Beast be not the Roman empire of Daniel, as is supposed, yet it may appear paradoxical to question Rome being intended by the "*seven mountains*;" for by the universal interpretation of all ages, by ancient and modern, by Catholic, by Romanist, and by Protestant, it is concluded without doubt that by Babylon Rome is signified, either pagan or ecclesiastical; and Rome is proverbially known as the city on the seven hills. "Babylon," says Tertullian, "with our John is put figuratively for the city of Rome, as great, proud of empire, and warring against the saints."⁴ St. Augustin more than once speaks of Babylon as Rome; "Babylon itself, like a former Rome, in its meeting with the city of God that stranger of the world. And Rome as a second Babylon. Or as

² Rom. i. 18-32; 2 Tim. iii.

³ See chap. xiii. 3; xvii. 8.

⁴ Con. Judæos, cap. ix.; and Con. Marcion. lib. iii. cap. 13.

the daughter of Babylon.”⁵ And St. Jerome frequently : “On the forehead of the purple harlot is written a name of blasphemy, that is of eternal Rome.”⁶ “When I was at Babylon, an inmate of that purple harlot, and lived after the manner of the Romans.”⁷ And in remarkable and striking words, “Unto thee will I speak, who by confession of Christ hast blotted out the name of blasphemy written on thy brow, thou mighty city, city mistress of the world, city praised by an Apostle’s voice.” “That curse which in the Apocalypse the Saviour hath threatened against thee, thou art able to escape through repentance, having the example of the Ninevites.”⁸ The impression on earlier writers, as St. Irenæus, is evidently the same, that Rome is intended. And among later ages the only matter considered questionable on this point has been, as Cornelius à Lapide says, whether it be heathen or Christian Rome ; the Rome heathen of old, or as becoming so again in the last days ; or whether it be the Church there. That it must be Rome, in short, in some sense.

But, against this weight of authority, it must be observed that St. John says, “*Here is the mind which hath wisdom ;*” whereas it requires no divine wisdom to see the City of Rome on the Seven Hills, for it is seen as such in most heathen authors, of which numerous instances will occur to the classical reader ; but to understand the mystic power of the symbolic language requires Scriptural wisdom. According to the analogy of the allegoric interpretation of the Apocalypse it need not be the city of Rome ; but as the ten-horned Beast is something far more extensive than Rome, so would its “*seven heads*” appear to be. The

⁵ Civ. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. ii.

⁶ Epist. cli. Ad. Algas. Quæes. ii.

⁷ Prolog. in Libr. Did. de Spir. Sanc. ⁸ Con. Jov. lib. ii.

hill or mount is the place of strength ; there is the mountain of holiness, the mount of God, Mount Sinai, and Mount Sion, but everything is amplified in the Christian Church into the fulness of the Sacred Seven : the one candlestick of the Law, the trumpet of Mount Sinai, become the seven candlesticks of the Church Catholic, the seven trumpets of Pentecost ; so the one Mount Sion in the Christian Church becomes necessarily "seven mountains." "The house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it."⁹ Such are the "seven hills" and the "many waters" of the nations on which she sits. This appears more consistent with the meaning of the highest of all Divines than the allusion to the seven hills of Rome, a seven-hilled city. The seven never occurs thus in the Apocalypse.

But it may be said that there is this difference in the case, that the seven hills are here given by the Holy Spirit as the interpretation of the seven heads ; and as in the explanations given in the Apocalypse itself, as of the seven Candlesticks being seven Churches, of the Dragon being Satan, and the like, we must take the interpretation as literal, so when the seven hills are given us as the interpretation, to that interpretation alone must we adhere. But in answer to this it must be said, that it is given us thus as a "mystery" to be understood by "wisdom ;" and that, in like manner, the seven stars are explained as the seven Angels of the Churches, but the Angels themselves are still figurative, and to be spiritually understood. And the ten horns are interpreted as ten kings, but meaning thereby not literally ten kings, but all the great ones of the earth.

It must be granted that the last verse of this chapter,

⁹ Micah iv. 1.

"The Woman is that great city which reigneth," or, literally, "hath a kingdom," "over the kings of the earth," does still more decisively mark the imperial Rome. But let it be taken for Rome as well as Babylon; they may both alike stand for the representatives of worldly ambition, tyranny, and the like: and which, as such, are applied to the Church itself, in like manner as Sodom and Egypt, without reference to the Church in those places. If this be the case, then the Church Universal might be Babylon, and, as such, intimately connected with Antichrist, and not the Church of Rome only. For doubtless the Harlot is a faithless Church.

There are, therefore, three ways of understanding it: either as ancient Rome, representing worldliness; or as the Church of Rome; or as not Rome at all, but the Church Universal. With regard to the first—as the Babylon, the Jerusalem, the Sodom, and Egypt of the Apocalypse, and as the Mount Sion and mountain of Jerusalem (chap. xiv. 1; xxi. 10) are evidently not to be taken literally and locally, but spiritually and mystically, it might seem that Rome also, or the City on Seven Hills, is also to be so taken. The City on many waters is not the local Babylon, but spiritually so called; the city in which the Lord was crucified (chap. xi. 8) is not the local Jerusalem, but spiritually so called; the city on the seven hills, "which reigneth over the kings of the earth," by parity of interpretation, is not the local city of Rome, but the principle of worldly greatness and ambition. The Apocalypse requires one mode of exposition throughout. Thus it is taken by Primasius, that the seven heads imply seven mountains, and thereby indicate Rome, which presides on seven hills; and as she had dominion over the world, she serves as the type of such worldly power. But if so, we must add it is

worldliness within the Church, for this the Harlot implies. To this we adhere.

In another way of interpretation it may be said—she that sitteth on many waters is the Babylon of the Old Testament; she that sitteth on seven hills is Rome; and the city that hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth is Rome. And since the Harlot is undoubtedly a Church, in this sense the Woman must be the Church of Rome.

But, on the other hand, she sits on seven hills and on many waters; as the waters are not literal, why should the hills be? The many waters on which she sits are many peoples (ver. 15); the seven hills are seven strong places of power; and she that “hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth” is, in the Prophet’s description, the Church Universal, to which “kings shall be the nursing fathers:” they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet.”¹ Then the Harlot, or “the Mother of Harlots,” would be the Church throughout the world, guilty of spiritual idolatry in preferring other things to Christ crucified. Add to which, that in this sense she would be more co-extensive with the Beast on which she rides, for the Beast is of universal extent.

For the characteristics of this peculiar fornication may be true of other Churches; and the corruptions of wealth, and especially the figures taken from Tyre, which are afterwards introduced in the fall of Babylon, would indicate either the Church of Rome hereafter to extend more among maritime nations; or that other Churches are therein described. “Many waters”—seas traversed over as circulating veins of the old and the new world, on which sits the great Christian Church, unfaithful to her Lord. And it is particularly to be noticed that the lamentations of

¹ Isa. xlix. 23.

Babylon, which afterwards ensue at great length, dwell on the corruptions of wealth, such as all nations, societies, and bodies of men are subject to, but which in Christians are idolatrous: "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness."² This is the characteristic.

The Greek interpreters speak of the seven hills as capable of this mode of interpretation, as distinguished from that of the seven-hilled city. "The things spoken of being spiritual, there is need of spiritual wisdom to understand what things are intended. The seven heads and seven hills on which the universal Babylon is seated are seven places pre-eminent in power, on which the kingdom of the world is established: Nineveh, of the Assyrians; Ecbatana, of the Medes; Babylon, of the Chaldeans; Susa, of the Persians; the kingdom of Macedon; the ancient Rome; and the new Rome." And with these they connect the seven kings, as Ninus, Arbaces, Nebuchodonosor, Cyrus, Alexander, Romulus, and Constantine.

Still it must be allowed that the prophecy does in some awful manner hover, as with boding raven wing, over Rome. Aretas suggests that the Harlot may not be old Rome, but the world, by fornication meaning all declining from God, as it is said, "Thou hast destroyed all that commit fornication against Thee." And of the sitting on many waters, that it is said of the world, "He hath founded it upon the seas and prepared it upon the floods." Which, when applied to the Church, confirms the extensive sense here supposed. "But others," says Aretas, "have conceived the Harlot either to be the ancient Rome, or that universal dominion which extends to the second

² Jer. li. 13.

coming of Christ ; and the waters on which she sits to be the nations over which she has and will rule. And though it be difficult to suppose this, on account of her having lost her ancient dominion, yet nothing prevents the recovery of it. Thus, the Lord having royally clothed Himself with many nations, His voice is said to be of many waters. And the Assyrian river in Isaiah is put for the people coming against Jerusalem." "On account of the great confusion of things," says Aretas, "it must needs be called Babylon at the period when these things are to be : whether it be that old Rome itself, as appears to the divine Apostle Peter,³ in which hath been shed the blood of the martyrs of Christ ; or the new Rome, since in the new Rome itself, in the times of the Arians, was shed the blood of many of the orthodox. It is called the mother of Harlots because it hath received power over other cities ; and you cannot be far from the truth in supposing it either the ancient Rome, or the new Rome, or the season of Antichrist. For in all these, and in all those springing from them, is shed the blood of martyrs."

St. Peter says, in the well-known passage referred to, "The Church that is at Babylon saluteth you ;" meaning by Babylon, as it has been generally and from earliest times understood, the city of Rome : for the application was obvious, as Babylon in the Old Testament was the heathen mistress of the world, which persecuted and kept in bondage the children of God ; so had Rome now succeeded to the same character. But if St. Peter thus used the expression without comment thus figuratively to be understood, much more may St. John, when describing mystically the Church of later ages, introduce both the word Babylon and the seven-hilled city, as alike expressive

³ 1 Peter v. 13.

of that power of spiritual idolatry whereby the stranger of God is corrupted and enthralled ; meaning thereby neither Babylon nor Rome, but a state of the Christian world which has become a mystery and confusion from its great unfaithfulness to God.

It may, indeed, be possible that both interpretations are true ; as the Seven Churches of Asia did really exist ; yet in the Apocalypse their state, local character, and circumstances are given to express, in addition to their particular intention, universal principles of Christ's governing His Church by His Spirit ; so the local Church of Rome may be designated, and given as a type and instance of the corruption of the Christian Church throughout the whole world, which is at the same time mainly intended ; even as a literal and partial fulfilment is often found in Scripture together with a more general and spiritual.

In short there would be no reason, according to the analogy of the Apocalypse, to conclude that Rome is here literally intended, were it not from the fact of there being a Church there of so wonderful and mysterious a character. But this inference is to interpret prophecy from the event or supposed fulfilment, which we are desirous to avoid. Otherwise, it would seem very doubtful whether the local Rome were intended any more than the local Jerusalem and the local Babylon, excepting so far as they supply remarkable symbolic types. In like manner the four empires or four Beasts of Daniel do, when taken together, form a Beast of seven heads ; but that Beast in the Apocalypse is not supposed to represent literally those seven kingdoms for which they stand in Daniel, but they are taken in the extensive symbolic sense of the universal principle of infidelity. So the seven hills of the Roman city express a certain idea, which is ascertained by the

usual language of the sacred hieroglyphic. On the other hand, one cannot but feel assured, by a careful attention to all the parts of the Apocalypse itself, and to the Old Testament, to which all the figures constantly refer, that by the Harlot is intended—not the infidel world or any heathen city, but a Christian Church, or the Church universal, or the whole Christian name. This latter must be added. For as Samaria is represented as an Harlot as well as Jerusalem, the lapsed and broken Israel as well as Judah, so Christian bodies, in form less perfect, and not according to the measured primitive pattern of the Church, may yet be included under the name of “the Mother of Harlots.” Inasmuch as in various ways and under different circumstances, according to diversity of age and country, they may yet agree in this alliance more or less with the great principle of infidelity. For it may be so universal, that wherever “Christ is named,” there also is the enemy, corrupting that Christian body; ever since the time when St. John said, “that spirit of Antichrist, which even now already is in the world.”

SECTION IV

THE SEVEN KINGS

CHAP. XVII. “¹⁰ And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. ¹¹ And the Beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”

The seven heads of the Beast are seven hills or strong places of power. There are, it is further added, “*Seven Kings*” or kingdoms. Yet these, though mentioned in connection with the seven heads, cannot be considered as

the same, inasmuch as the Beast himself is one of the seven. The ambiguity of the whole indicates that something is alluded to in the Old Testament, to which every thing is to be referred. The four Beasts of Daniel have altogether seven heads, for the leopard has four,¹ and these seven heads are seven kingdoms; one of these seven heads has formed the basis of this emblematic Beast of St. John, for he is like the head of the last in that he has ten horns. This Beast, therefore, is properly said to be one "*of the seven*"—not of the seven heads he now himself wears, but of the seven kingdoms of Daniel; as arising out of one of them, which is the Roman.

A reference to Daniel likewise explains the other difficulty, that he is not only "*of the seven*," but also "*the eighth*." For this Apocalyptic Beast corresponds with the Little Horn of Daniel, which arises among the ten horns of this seventh head, and by its rising roots up three, by which it becomes itself "*the eighth*." Not as Mede would take it, "depresses," so much as supersedes by his rising;² so that it might be said also to uproot, or supplant and suppress the three, and stand in their place the "*eighth*."³ "The three," says St. Jerome, "being slain, the seven others shall be subject to him."⁴ "The three being destroyed," says Lactantius, "and the rest reduced."⁵ Thus Irenæus; "It is clear that the coming one will slay three of these, and subjugate the rest, and become *the eighth* among them."⁶ And St. Cyril; "It is manifest that of the ten former kings he shall subdue three, that he himself may reign *the eighth*; and he shall speak

¹ Dan. vii. 6. ² "Excussit tria." Civ. Dei. xx. xxiii.

³ ἐξεργίζωθῃ, Dan. vii. 8; ταπεινώσει, ver. 24.

⁴ In Dan. ad loc.

⁵ Epitom. cap. viii.

⁶ Lib. v. Adv. Hor.

great words against the Most High.”⁷ From which it is evident that from Daniel he is proverbially known as “*the eighth*.” And if there appears here some confusion between the seven and the eight, as being one of the seven and yet one beyond them, there occurs the same difficulty in Daniel, where the Beast himself, being one of the seven heads, is, as it were, confounded with the Little Horn itself.⁸ An ambiguity which the fulfilment alone will explain.

The Beast is one “*of the seven*” because it is heathen Rome that crucified the Lord of life, and slew His martyrs, *i.e.* one of Daniel’s seven heads or kingdoms; but also “*the eighth*,” as the Little Horn, and in this respect made up of the four Beasts altogether. It is old heathen Rome revived in the Little Horn with seven-headed, ten-horned power. It is, and yet it is not; it is dead, yet revived: one of the seven, yet not so, for it is one beyond—the eighth. As eighth he is the counterpart and counterfeit to the true Christ, Who is of the eighth day; of Him Who “is, and was, and is to come:” whereas he “*was, and is not*,” for he is as one already slain, in the counsels of God, and shall soon cease to be.

He is one of “*Seven Kings*,” of which seven “*five are fallen*, and *one is not yet come*,” but is to “*continue a short time*,” probably the final Antichrist. Out of these seven, then, only “*one*,” says St. John, *is now in being*; and if that is this Beast, it must be Rome, *i.e.* the king or kingdom of Rome. Aretas, in speaking of these as the seven great empires, the Assyrian, Median, Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, the old Roman and the new, adds; “Of these five are fallen already; the sixth was that in which the Apocalypse was seen, which consisted in the ancient Rome;

⁷ Lect. xv. 13.

⁸ See Dan. vii. 11.

but the seventh was not yet come, which was to be in new Rome, which should reign till the Apostate, which would be short in duration compared with the former." "But the Beast, that is Antichrist, is the eighth, as to arise after the seven kingdoms; but one of the seven, as springing forth from one of them. For not from any other nation, but as king of the Romans, will he come for the destruction of those that obey him."

It is worthy of notice that in the Prophet Daniel (vii. 4), of the Beast which represents Babylon, is added; "I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given it." These words have never met with any satisfactory solution; they may contain some allusion to this Babylon, now appearing in connection with that Beast whose characteristic is that he has "the eyes of a man."

These "Seven Kings" are usually explained by moderns as the seven successive forms of government in the history of heathen Rome, kings, consuls, tribunes, decemvirs, dictators, emperors, in order to build up the conclusion of the seventh and eighth at last combining in the temporal and spiritual powers of Papal Rome; but, to say nothing of other objections, it seems in itself improbable that this book of Divine Wisdom should require to be thus studied by a minute analysis of the history of a heathen nation; it is more suitable that it should have the Old Testament, written by the same spirit, for its constant reference and explanation. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee."⁹

It has been before maintained¹ that this ten-horned Beast arising from the sea is not the ten-horned Beast

⁹ Isa. xxx. 21.

¹ See pp. 226, 227.

which arises from the sea in Daniel, but another ten-horned Beast, which corresponds with the Little Horn. But it may be answered that while this opinion, if true, goes to prove that it is not Rome which is intended, yet it only removes by a further step the connection which still continues, inasmuch as the Little Horn arises out of the ten-horned Beast of Daniel which represents the ancient heathen Rome; and that this serves to express the distinction between the modern ecclesiastical Rome and the ancient heathen empire; while the Little Horn corresponds with the gradual rise and humble pretension of its chief ruler, as calling himself "Servus Servorum," and clothed with Christian lowliness, but on nearer inspection found to have the arrogant claim of universal sway. But this circumstance of Antichrist or the Little Horn arising out of the Roman Empire admits of another explanation; for as the visible Church arises as a great tree from a grain of mustard seed, and as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands² breaks in pieces the kingdoms of the world, so this antichristian principle, which Satan raises to be co-extensive and coeval with it, arises from small beginnings out of the idolatrous empires of the heathen world; and a ten-horned Beast again fills the whole world from the Little Horn. Thus the visible Church, proving at length so adulterous and unfaithful, sits on the Beast that arose from that old Roman empire which killed Christ and His martyrs.

The sixth as then existing, whether heathen Rome or not, is remarkable as being the number of Antichrist. And with the seven empires of Aretas might be mentioned the seven ages of the world, as connected with the seven days of its creation; at this time of the Woman sitting on the

² Dan. ii. 45.

Beast five ages, or five thousand years, may have passed ; the sixth age being the reign of the Beast³—the number 666, or the sixth of the world without God—of evil multiplied ; but the seventh age to come is to be the completion of all things, to be swallowed up by the eighth day, the seventh day which has no evening, lost in the eighth.

SECTION V

THE TEN HORNS

CHAP. XVII. “¹² And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet ; but receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. ¹³ These have one mind, and shall give their power and their strength unto the Beast. ¹⁴ These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them : for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings : and they that are with Him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.”

It must ever be remembered, as we have before had occasion to show, that these “*Ten Horns*” are not the same as the ten horns on the Beast in Daniel, which St. Jerome¹ and other ecclesiastical writers speak of as those kings that destroyed the Roman empire. For this Beast itself is the Little Horn that arises among those ten of Daniel uprooting three, and therefore not co-existent with the ten ; but the ten signifies, as St. Augustin suggests, universality of dominion.² As the seven heads of the Beasts in Daniel signifying seven kingdoms, and here all meeting in one intimate that the kingdoms of the earth will form this one body, as animated by one spirit, so its ten horns represent all the great and powerful of the world which it sways. Antichrist, on the throne of Satan, will

³ See Irenæus, lib. v.

¹ In Dan. vii. 8.

² Civ. Dei, xx. xxiii.

have in league with him the powers of the world, and all these will contend with the Lamb. "The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed; saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."³ They will be the leaders of that innumerable army which went forth in the sixth Trumpet, horsemen sitting on horses, the great men of the earth, swaying the multitudes on which they ride. And these appeared again in the sixth Vial, as instigated by those evil spirits that went forth from the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the Beast, and the mouth of the false prophet—"went forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day;" *i.e.* to meet with the Lamb and His elect here spoken of, and afterwards described as the Word of God and His army on white horses. For then He may be seen with "many crowns," and with the same name as in this place, the "*Lord of lords, and King of kings.*" Indeed, "*the Ten Horns*" might be but another name for those armies of Antichrist under a new aspect, and the seven horns of the Lamb for His armies that oppose them. The Lamb has seven horns, from His manifold grace; but only one head, from the unity of the faith. The seven heads of the Beast Lacunza supposes to be seven forms of false religion under one body; but this is not so in strictness, for it is all of infidelity: the false religion arises from his connection with the false prophet or Babylon. At all events, they are of diversity in principles or strongholds of evil.

"*They give their power and their strength to the Beast;*" this seems to be, as Daniel says of him, "His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power." And, indeed, the

³ Ps. ii. 2, 3.

Beast appears never apart from either the second Beast, or the harlot, or the false prophet, or the ten kings. It may be that such unmix'd evil were self-annihilating, and would soon hasten to its end, unless it received a principle of life from combination.

There is such constant allusion to the Prophets in the expressions of the Apocalypse, as explanatory of them or being explained by them, that the words "*which have received no kingdom as yet*" may be intended to intimate that it is speaking of something to arise subsequent to the ten horns of Daniel, with which interpreters have so much confused them. The power which these ten horns shall receive in conjunction with the Beast is "*one hour*," which might signify at one and the same hour with the Beast; that they shall come into existence together with him, as they enter into the description of the Beast when St. John first sees him arise from the sea—"having ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns."⁴ Or it may be merely "*for one hour*," i.e. for a short period, as it is understood by the Greek commentators; it seems to imply that short space of time ascribed to the reign of Antichrist at the end, and after Babylon has been removed, that destined and marked period so often designated in mystery, perhaps more emphatically known as the days of Antichrist, when the days shall be shortened for "the elect's sake;" that one of the seven which shall "continue for a short space" (ver. 10). That "hour, and day, and month, and year" for which the armies of Antichrist were prepared in the sixth Trumpet. Such may be the time when for three days and a half the witnesses shall lie dead, when the daily sacrifice shall be taken away for half a week.

⁴ Rev. xiii. 1.

The mention of their "*making war with the Lamb,*" and being "*overcome*" by Him, is here introduced by anticipation as descriptive of them—except that this war is in some sense always proceeding, and the Lamb always victorious—but what it more especially alludes to is the army with Him, afterwards going forth, which are the same as are here mentioned in plainer terms as "*the called, the elect, the faithful,*" names by which all Christians are spoken of in the New Testament. "*Called*" and "*chosen*" to the *faith*, first by the Holy Spirit in baptismal regeneration; secondly, by the same Spirit through obedience; and thirdly, as found "*faithful,*" and "*called,*" and "*chosen*" by Christ at the last day.

It is evident that Antichrist and these ten kings continue after the fall of Babylon, and then come to the height of their power. The harlot is but for a time; and during that period her sitting on the Beast, or riding, appears to intimate some sort of control or restraint upon the Beast: and it may be that she is that which is said to "let," to "withhold," or hinder⁵ that wicked one from being revealed;—τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων exactly expresses the holding in as of one that rides, reins, and restrains; which keeps under the ἀποστασία which is to take place, the "mystery of iniquity" which is already working. Thus comes forth in strong characters with "MYSTERY" on her brow, that strong combination of the Church with the world, which, being removed, the wicked one will be manifest." She now sits, and seduces with her cup, yet restrains. He that letteth has been supposed to be the imperial heathen Rome. But by some the Christian Church of Rome, which checks the outpouring of evil. It may be some mysterious blending of the two in

⁵ 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

that Church. Or rather the Church Universal, though unfaithful to her high calling.

Although it was the early opinion of the Church that Rome was this power that letteth, yet it was not such as to be beyond question or discussion. It was an indefinite apprehension. Thus Tertullian alleges as a reason for Christians praying for the Roman emperors and empire, inasmuch as Rome was considered to be that which retarded the breaking out of that violence which overhangs the world.⁶ And Lactantius, in like manner, as that whose continuance was to be prayed for, "lest too soon should come that abominable tyrant who shall put out that light at whose destruction the world shall fall."⁷ But St. Chrysostom says; "What is it that withholdeth, that is, hindereth, him from being revealed? Some, indeed, say the grace of the Spirit, but others the Roman empire; to whom I most of all accede. Because if he meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly."⁸ But what if the mystery be explained by its being a strange complication of power combined of these two, having permanence and strength because therein is the Spirit of God, still present in Creeds and Sacraments, even amidst this heathen corruption which would "pollute the sanctuary of strength,"⁹ yet while it continues keeping under "the abomination which maketh desolate." A Church, however adulterous and corrupt, yet may keep down the open breaking forth of the floodgates and of Antichrist. The Babylon—the commingling—the Church leagued with the world—like the iron mixed with the clay¹—the strength of God with man's corruptions, this may be the mystery that holdeth under and restraineth, till she

⁶ In Apolog. 32. ⁷ Lib. vii. cap. 25. ⁸ In 2 Thess. ii. 6.

⁹ Dan. xi. 31.

¹ Dan. ii. 34.

is overthrown, "then shall that wicked one," who so long and so extensively hath worked secretly, "be revealed."

The long continuance of an empire implies the existence of some good thing in it, as piety and obedience in ancient Rome gave it strength and stability although blended with tyranny and lust; and the long continuance of any Christian Church indicates its holding in preservation some holy depository of truth; but this may be the case with extensive corruption; the mystery of truth therein preserving life, the mystery of evil working death. Such a state of things is implied in the very term *Babylon*, and that of "*Mystery*," and the wonder of the Apostle that witnessed it. It is difficult for us to realize the whole subject of our spiritual condition; for the distinction is not as between the Gentiles and the holy people, or *Babylon* and *Jerusalem*. Since St. John in his Epistle spoke of the spirit of Antichrist having already come, the contest between Christ and Antichrist has become more and more involved and complicate: the principles at war being in one and the same heart; both in one family; in one Church; and in a way that it may be impossible altogether to separate them, as the parable of the Tares and the Wheat indicates. Such is the great work of Satan. The whole superstructure may be fair and of long continuance, but without that foundation of the Rock which is faith in the Incarnation of Christ; or rather that such, the foundation, will be gradually withdrawn by the great enemy of souls—both in a false Church and a false Christian. Such is the case when the character is not formed by the indwelling of Christ crucified. But this is not known till the great trial, when the winds blow and the floods rise. "And the ruin of that house was great."

SECTION VI

THE TEN HORNS CONSPIRING

CHAP. XVII. “¹⁵ And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which thou sawest and the Beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth.”

The account now returns to the Woman ; she had been sitting on the many *waters* of the nations of the world—of many tongues as Babel ; she had been carried on the Beast ; she had been committing fornication with the kings of the earth (chap. xvii. 2) ; it is she that “reigneth over the kings of the earth ;” they have been all subject to her in her adulteries, but now her time is come, and they rise against her. And the account is still all based on the adulterous Jerusalem of the Prophets and the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel : “Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord.” “Behold, I will gather all thy lovers with whom thou hast taken pleasure.” “I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness.” “They shall break down thy high places, and leave thee naked and bare.” “And they shall burn thine houses with fire.”¹ And it is remarkable that all these very same figures are again repeated against Jerusalem, as the harlot, in the same Prophet.² Her lovers brought by God against her ; her desolation and nakedness ;

¹ Ezek. xvi. 37-41.

² See Ezek. xxiii. 22, 29, 30.

and, for the same causes, her whoredom with the heathen and a heart alienated from God. In the words of another Prophet, we may say ; “These are *the horns* which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”³ But she is “*burned with fire*” because of her being “the Holy City” which has been unchaste : it is all bound up in the Law, for amidst the sanctification of priests, it is added ; “And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, she profaneth her father ; she shall be *burnt with fire*.”⁴ And it may be observed, that it is on account of “fornication” that this city is punished ; that is her crime throughout ; *i.e.* as a Christian Church, not keeping her faith.

Again ; it is God that judgeth and executeth vengeance : thus it is here stated, “*God hath put in their hearts to agree, and fulfil His will ;*” and it is this on which the Prophet dwells with emphatic repetition in the judgment on Jerusalem : “Behold, I will gather all thy lovers—I will even gather them—I will judge thee—and I will also give thee into their hand.”⁵

Rome and Jerusalem were united in putting Christ to death, and in persecuting His Church ; but Rome rose against Jerusalem, and burnt it with fire—itself surviving ; so the Beast and the ten kings are combined with the Harlot in persecuting Christ’s witnesses and saints for a time, but rise afterwards against her, and destroy her with fire. The figure is from the past, where it was fulfilled in the letter ; but that to which it points hereafter may be mystical and spiritual in its accomplishment. We are surrounded with shadows and intimations of its truth ; for thus mutually opposed and contending parties will “*agree*” with that “*one mind*” here twice spoken of (μίαν γνώμην),

³ Zech. i. 19.⁴ Lev. xxi. 9.⁵ Ezek. xvi. 37, 39.

confederate together—as Caiaphas and Judas, priests and people, Pilot and Herod against Christ—in one common hatred against His Church ; and this will in some measure be the case, however unfaithful that Church may be, on account of that Cross to which she bears unwilling testimony, however adulterous. The world, on which she leans, will turn against her ; the shadow of Egypt shall be her ruin. St. Irenæus has the remarkable application, that “ Antichrist will be the unjust judge,” spoken of in our Lord’s parable, “ ‘ who feared not God, neither regarded man,’ to whom the widow forgotten of God, that is the earthly Jerusalem, flies to be avenged of her adversary.”⁶ For that parable is spoken with a reference to our Lord’s coming and not finding faith on the earth. A carnal Jerusalem will be looking to the Unjust one.

“ The world will love its own,” but they all with one mind will hate the Harlot, there must be something therefore in Babylon different from the world ; something still that bears witness to God and His truth, though she keeps not her high trust. Thus it is here mentioned that the Beast with these ten horns will make war with Christ and His saints, before it is stated that they hate and destroy the harlot. And it is remarkable how exactly this corresponds with the former type ; for thus ancient idolatrous Rome slew Christ and His saints, and then proceeded to *make desolate, destroy, and burn* the harlot Jerusalem.

This destruction of Babylon may perhaps correspond with the drying up of the river Euphrates under the sixth Vial, for the taking of Babylon of old was by the drying up of the river.⁷ And, in the sixth Vial, it is followed by the evil spirits going forth “ unto the kings of the earth,” to prepare them for the great conflict of the armies

⁶ Adv. Hor. lib. v.

⁷ Jer. li. 36.

in which the Beast and the false prophet are "taken," which occurs after the destruction of Babylon. In like manner of coincidence in time, the second Angel, in the fourteenth chapter, announces the fall of Babylon; and the third Angel, which follows, warns of the wrath of God poured out on those that worship the Beast and his image. All these passages intimate the reign of Antichrist as succeeding immediately on the fall of Babylon. We find, also, that after Babylon ceases, the false prophet or the second lamb-like Beast again comes forth in attendance on the Beast; from whose mouth, as well as that of the Beast, the evil spirits had gone forth to excite the kings to the battle. Their never being mentioned at the same time, indicates the Harlot to be for a time that which is otherwise represented as the lamb-like Beast or false prophet. She departs—then the false prophet still remains. The inference from this is too striking and awful to need comment, and too mysterious to allow of it with safety.

Whatever may be the exact meaning and full extent of this figure of Babylon, thus much may be certainly gathered from it. That during the period of the Christian kingdom religion will be for a time in the ascendant—will sit upon, control, and keep under the many, the infidel world; and this it will do by an unholy alliance with it, and an unfaithful combination with the great, the rich, and powerful. That this state will, as it were of a sudden, be found to have gone by; and another state of things will then ensue, until the end, in which infidelity will be predominant; the many-headed and many-horned Beast will be the uppermost, and religion subservient to it, under the figure of the false prophet.

We have found that St. Augustin speaks of this Beast as the whole multitude of unbelievers; and early writers

often speak of Antichrist in a sense so extensive, as must apply rather to this great principle of evil which the Beast embodies, than to "the man of sin" personally. "He will be seated," says St. Chrysostom, "in the temple of God; not that in Jerusalem only, but in the Churches everywhere."⁸ And the expression of Origen's, that he will sit in the holy place of the Scriptures themselves,⁹ may imply no less. If, therefore, the Beast is so universal, the Harlot who sits upon him is probably so also; as was the dominion of Babylon and Rome in the more visible type.

In what, therefore, will her downfall consist, or how will it be so entire and simultaneous? So terrible a judgment must be beyond comprehension, but we may see parts and indications of it. For although the fall of Babylon is spoken of as in a manner sudden with regard to its chief consummation, yet, as the war of the Beast with Christ and His saints, although leading to some final contest, yet must be continuous in some degree in all time and place; in like manner, in various ages and countries may this destruction of Babylon be fulfilled in different measures, and found in lesser accomplishments. Something of this gradual completion may be in this account: "*They shall hate the whore;*" and then, as if a breaking out of that general hatred, "*and shall make her desolate, and naked;*" and then, in further degree of judgment, with the metaphor of the wild beast, "*shall eat her flesh;*" and, lastly, shall utterly destroy all that remains of her, "*shall burn her with fire.*" When the Church of God becomes corrupted with wealth and honour she may be in high place for a time, making a friend of the world and seducing; but she will be *hated* for her covetousness,

⁸ In 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

⁹ See Holy Week, p. 278.

and, when the opportunity occurs, will be *spoiled* and exposed to shame, and become a prey, and at length overthrown. This may be going on in different places and times, not exactly as fulfilments of the great prophecy, but as affording sufficient light to enable us to read thereby the Divine words. This is confirmed by what follows; for this mention is by anticipation, and we have Babylon afterwards in ruins.

SECTION VII

THE FALL OF BABYLON

CHAP. XVIII. “¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power: and the earth was lightened with his glory. ² And he cried mightily with a strong voice, She is fallen, Babylon the great is fallen! and is become an habitation of devils, and an hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. ³ For all nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxen rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Before trial and judgment there is a call and light from God: such was Noah to the world before the deluge; Lot to Sodom; Josiah to Israel, and the finding of the Book of the Law, before the captivity; Daniel to Babylon and its palaces; our Lord's presence to Jerusalem before its destruction; and now, before the fall of Babylon and the evil days of Antichrist to ensue, there is, in the living and sublime imagery of the Apocalypse, the “*Angel*” descending “*from Heaven*” with “*great power*,” and the *earth illumined* by his presence. The breaking forth of a flame, as it wanes, before being extinguished in darkness. The preaching of the Gospel to the whole world before the end.

The image itself and circumstances connected with it,

as preceding the fall of "the great city," corresponds with "the Angel ascending from the East," *i.e.* as the herald of Christ's coming, which, immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem, cries to the four Angels of judgment to pause till the children of God are sealed. And in the same connection it combines the description of the Prophet Ezekiel: "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East—and the earth shined with His glory." And it seems to explain by juxta position this event. For it is stated that the Presence of God had been hindered by the defilements and abominations of Israel: "Now let them put away their whoredoms . . . and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed,—and let them measure the pattern."¹ It appears from this that in the bringing of God's people out of Babylon there will be a great light, and a putting away of this spiritual fornication and whoredom by a return to the primitive pattern. And yet the separation and events before and after seem to indicate that evil, as well as good, will exist in a more intense form, indicated by the very coming out of Babylon, a corrupt state of things, and the unclean spirits that will dwell in her ruins. That while "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; the wicked shall do wickedly."²

And this surely is implied in this passage—that there will be the chasteness, the sternness, and severity of the primitive Christian, because it is opposed to those who have "*waxen rich*" amid the "*abundance of delicacies*" of the spiritual harlot. There must be loyalty of faith, as opposed to her adultery; sobriety to her intoxication; poverty of spirit, contrasted with her ambition. It must be as the coming of Elijah. Covetousness, ambition, and

¹ Ezek. xliii. 2, 9, 10.

² Dan. xii. 10.

luxury sit at ease, drunk with the blood of souls for which Christ died. The days of Noah and the days of Lot again are realized. Far is her desolating wing felt among the isles; and under the deadly shade droops the true Israel of God.

One great part of this description consists in this, that it shows in so striking a manner that the Old Testament is not lost in all its particulars; it adheres to the prophetic figures, and turns our attention to them. "It shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island. There shall the great owl make her nest. There shall the vultures be gathered."³ Thus all things find a place, even to her very ruins. It brings out, and writes up in the sight of all men, the Divine words of old. As before, when she has been "a golden cup, that made all the earth drunken," and "the nations drunken with her wine:" until it is said: "My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul."⁴

But while the strict literal fulfilment of these things, of the ruins of Babylon and the wine-cup of her seductions, is to be found in the Babylon of the Prophets, from which the words are taken, they are doubtless to be accomplished in spiritual senses. It is even now seen in places where an adulterous Church has been and is removed: we see infidelity, licentiousness, and the "*unclean and hateful bird*" of heresies—"unclean," as external to God's Church; "*hateful*," for our Lord says, "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which I hate."⁵ "The woman," says Aretas, "does not mean any particular city, but the time of Antichrist."

And here the word "*fornication*" again comes in, which

³ Isa. xxxiv. 13-15.

⁴ Jer. li. 7, 45.

⁵ Rev. ii. 15.

is not the Babylon of the Prophets, where with her "*wine*" she makes *drunk* the "*nations*." In boasting themselves as the true children of Abraham, the Jews said ; "We be not born of fornication ; we have one Father, even God." To which our Lord's reply is ; "If God were your Father, ye would love Me." "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."⁶ Such is the nature of this fornication.

SECTION VIII

COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE

CHAP. XVIII. "4 And I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached up unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works : in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her : for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire : for strong *is* the Lord God who judgeth her."

The Holy City, defiled by the Gentiles, was called Sodom and Egypt, and afterwards Babylon. But from Egypt, and from Sodom, and from Babylon, and from Jerusalem, the people of God were called before the judgment came on those places ; and now they are called out of the mystic Babylon ; but how they continue therein till this time, and how they are to come out and be separate from her whose name is Confusion, must remain a mystery. But it is evident that the people of God are

⁶ John viii. 41-44.

within her up to this time ; and now distinctly by "*a voice from Heaven*" called upon to leave her ; but not till after it has been declared that Babylon has already fallen, and the earth been illumined by an Angel of light. The judgment had already gone forth when Noah, and Lot, and Israel were summoned to come out. "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar:"¹ even so already appears the dawn of the great morning. "Meanwhile," as St. Augustin says, "these two cities are mingled together at the end to be severed. And from this temporal mingling it comes to pass that some men belonging to Babylon order the things of Jerusalem, and some belonging to Jerusalem order the things of Babylon." "Thus," he observes, "there were wicked kings of Jerusalem, who were citizens of this mystic Babylon ; and citizens of Jerusalem ordered the affairs of Babylon, as the three children, ministers of Nabuchodonosor." He had before described the difference. "All who mind earthly things, who choose earthly happiness before God, who seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, belong to that one city which is mystically called Babylon. But all who mind the things that are above, who meditate on things heavenly, who live carefully in the world that they may not offend God, and, if they sin, not ashamed to confess, humble, mild, holy, just, godly, all these belong to that city which hath Christ for its king."²

But the mystical Harlot hath confounded the two, hath become Babylon, rather than the holy "vision of peace ;" is no more the Church of Pentecost, all harmonious union and one language by the indwelling of the Spirit, of "one heart and one mouth ;" but the Babel of confusion and many tongues.

¹ Gen. xix. 23.

² Enarr. in Psa. lxi.

"Come out of her, My people." This expression implies that the visible Church will be made up of the people of God and of Antichrist; but that at the termination there will be, in some divine manner, a separation made; that as in primitive times there was a winnowing by persecution and separation of the wheat from the chaff, so by some means will it be at the end; the Church of God will again cease to be confounded with the world. Perhaps *"the voice from Heaven"* implies that God will Himself by His providence effect this, or that He will render the distinction again clear and marked. "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi."³ The temporal prosperity with which His Church has been so long tried and corrupted will be at an end; and then follows the lament of Babylon; that unhallowed association hath passed, that which had lent such a charm to the world, when its good name, its wealth, its arts, and literature had become so intimately blended with Christianity; this fair Babylon, this confusion is over. Something of this kind may be implied in the destruction of that great city, a subject so replete with impenetrable mystery. The coming out of and discrimination from the world which those last fiery trials will occasion. And this will serve in some degree to explain this pathetic dirge of Babylon, for it is impossible to understand that lament merely of the world at large, for that cannot have come to an end; nor of any one city, from the universal nature of the figures; nor of any religious system or Church, for to leave such is not to leave behind every temptation to luxury as overthrown; but an alliance between Christianity and the world, which has existed for so many ages,

³ Mal. iii. 3.

having come to an end, so as to be no more for ever the great corrupter, the seducing sorceress—this being all over and for ever past, is a consideration which gives a most touching power and beauty to that lament throughout. For during the period of Babylon, Antichrist has been “to those that dwell on earth” the object of admiration and worship, but she has, notwithstanding, sat upon him; yet now she is trampled under his feet, or, rather, is no more.

The words, therefore, may be considered as partly prophetic and partly imperative: prophetic, inasmuch as a time is here foretold when Providence will bring about such a separation, and render such a distinction clear; and in the meanwhile, also, imperative, as demanding at all times our “escape to the mountain,” to the Jerusalem which is above, “the vision of peace”—from this Babel of discord, whose ambition and whose sins reach to Heaven. And it may be observed that many expressions of Scripture, whereby this same command is clothed, are both predictive of this great trial, and also imply an ever-present duty, as those words of our Lord, “Remember Lot’s wife;”⁴ and those of St. Paul, “Come out, and be ye separate;”⁵ alluding to this prophetic call out of Babylon of the Old Testament, and, at the same time, understood as a warning of universal application.

Thus, in this latter sense, Tichonius, “*This coming forth out of Babylon* ye must not understand bodily, but spiritually. The going out of the midst of Babylon is when evil conversation is relinquished. For in one house, and in one Church, and in one city the Babylonians are with the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and yet so long as neither good consent with the bad, nor the bad are con-

⁴ Luke xvii. 32.

⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

verted into good, Jerusalem is known by the good, and Babylon among the bad. They dwell together in body, but are in heart far divided : for the conversation of the bad is always on earth, for they love the earth, and place all their hope and intention of mind on earth ; but the mind of the good, according to the Apostle, is always in heaven." " But in this place," he says, " it is shown that Babylon is divided into two parts ; for while by the inspiration of God the evil are converted unto good, Babylon is divided, and from that part which hath departed from her, Jerusalem is formed." To this of Tichonius may be added the Greek writer Aretas. " The woman," he says, " signifies, as we have said, not any particular city, but the season of Antichrist. And her cup is worldly choice." It may be observed, that no doubt this general application arises from the circumstance of the fall of Babylon being, like that of Jerusalem, a type of the end of the world.

But, in addition to this mode of understanding it, as a command of universal application, for such abound in every part of this Divine Book, it must be considered, we maintain, as referring to a time when God will more distinctly call His people to separate themselves from this mixed state of things, and will Himself lead the way. " Depart ye ; " " go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean." " For the Lord will go before you."⁶ The solemn announcement, then, in this passage with " the *voice from Heaven*," together with the numerous expressions in the Old Testament with which the type is bound up, indicate that it refers to something which God will bring about in His own time ; yet with the prophecy intimating that there is, at the time of its fulfilment, a special command. " Go ye forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans."⁷ " Deliver

⁶ Isa. lii. 11, 12.

⁷ Isa. xlviii. 20.

thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon."⁸ "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul : be not cut off in her iniquity ; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance."⁹ But in Jeremiah, from which the description is most closely taken, the call is before her destruction is declared ; the marked characteristic of this in the Apocalypse is that it occurs afterwards.

It may be that flight of which our Lord speaks, when "the abomination of desolation shall stand in the holy place," when they that are in Judea are to "flee into the mountains." And it is in speaking of heathenism and idolatry that St. Paul applies the type, "Come out from among them, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."¹ And on the same subject of the worship of devils St. Augustin says : "What shall we say, but that we must flee from the midst of Babylon ? Which prophetic precept is spiritually understood that we flee from the city of this world, which, indeed, is the society of evil angels and evil men ; that by the steps of faith, which worketh by love, we flee by advancing onward unto the living God. For the greater we see the power of devils to be on these lowest things, the more closely must we cling to the Mediator, through Whom we ascend from the lowest to the highest."² To this we must add, that the period of this command in the Apocalypse appears to be on the great rising of Antichrist above all ; and on the destruction apparently of the outward and visible frame and form of Christianity, which is to precede the end.

It appears, therefore, like the call of Abraham from the gathering idolatry of the nations, and to be the ultimate

⁸ Zech. ii. 17.

⁹ Jer. li. 6.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

² Civ. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 18.

fulfilment of that great type which was seen of old in "the father of the faithful."

Thus St. Augustin, after mentioning as the opinion of some that Rome is the "power that letteth,"³ adds; "That others consider that power and the 'mystery that already worketh' to be the bad and false Christians within the Church, until they arrive at so great a number as to form the great people of Antichrist; and that this is the mystery of iniquity because it appears hidden."⁴ The opinion here maintained combines both of these interpretations stated by St. Augustin, in that the figurative Babylon or Rome is a corrupt state of Christianity, the mingling and working of which still hinders the manifestation of the evil one.

"In the meanwhile," still to apply the words of St. Augustin, "we have peace in this life; for as long as the two cities are blended together we enjoy the peace of Babylon; from which, indeed, the people of God are liberated through faith, but so that in the meanwhile their sojourn is in Babylon." To which St. Augustin goes on to apply the exhortation of the Apostle, that we should pray for kings and those in authority, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life;"⁵ and the command of the Prophet Jeremiah to the ancient people of God, that by obediently submitting to the captivity of Babylon "they should serve God by that patience, and should pray for it;" "for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace;"⁶ a temporal peace that is, in the mean while, such as is common to both good and bad.⁷

"*Her sins have reached up unto Heaven*"—"lifted up even to the skies,"⁸ as in the Babylon of the prophets;

³ 2 Thess. ii. 7.

⁴ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 19.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

⁶ Jer. xxix. 7.

⁷ De Civ. Dei, lib. xix. cap. 26.

⁸ Jer. li. 9.

she that thought "to reach unto Heaven"⁹ by her earthly wisdom, hath reached it by her judgment and her sins; exalted as Capernaum, and thrust down as low. For "*God hath remembered her sins,*" her "judgment slumbereth not." As it was said before, "the great Babylon was remembered before God."¹ She is visited for her old sins. The judgment hath come upon her to the uttermost; blood shed of old is required of her—"from the blood of righteous Abel," and from the blood of One far more righteous than he, "Who having been once dead, yet speaketh;" and the voice of Whose blood, with that of all His martyrs, "crieth from the ground." "*Reward her even as she rewarded you,*" as said before to the harlot Jerusalem, "I will even deal with thee as thou hast done."² The retribution is the fulfilment of the Law; its strict requital, on account of the Gospel of mercy being rejected. It was said of old; "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."³ As before in grace and pardon, so now in judgment: "*double unto her double according to her works.*" But the expression is remarkable—"reward *ye*;" as if it were by the instrumentality of the righteous that the judgment is wrought which we have so often had occasion to notice. Thus in the Psalmist there is pronounced a blessing on the requiting: "Blessed is he that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us."⁴ And Tichonius observes of the same; "All these things God speaks to good Christians, *i.e.* to the Church; for from the Church go forth plagues both visible and invisible."⁵ "*In the cup which she hath filled fill to her;*" as in the thanks-

⁹ Gen. xi. 4.¹ Rev. xvi. 19.² Ezek. xvi. 59.³ Isa. xl. 2.⁴ Ps. cxxxvii. 8.⁵ See pp. 266, 267.

giving of the third Vial, "They have shed blood," "and Thou hast given them blood to drink." But, as morally fulfilled, it may be this: Aretas says; "*The cup of Babylon is worldly choice.*" It is in that cup she is given to drink; for we know, as a law of God's moral providence, that a man is punished in that wherein he hath sinned. As this Babylon herself is overthrown by Antichrist, by that world she had loved too well, and by means of those kings with whom she had committed fornication.

In wonderful descriptiveness—"she hath glorified herself:" whereas the faithful Church says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."⁶ "*And lived deliciously,*" but "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." In the expressive account of the Babylon of old,⁷ she saith "*in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow.*"—she feels not herself a widow from the absence of her Lord, nor fasts in the days wherein the Bridegroom is taken away. Whereas "she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day,"⁸ even as the faithful Church, "instantly serving God day and night."⁹ She is the widow that ceases not her importunity, crying day and night to be avenged of her adversary. And "He will avenge her speedily."¹ She "*sits*" as if her warfare were accomplished, as "*a queen,*" at ease, and remembers not that the crown of her absent King was one of thorns; and His kingly robe was purple in mockery and with blood—with His own blood—not that of others. She "*sits*" a queen, but her Lord is still

⁶ Gal. vi. 14.

⁷ Isa. xlvii. 7, 8.

⁸ 1 Tim v. 5, 6.

⁹ Acts xxvi. 7.

¹ Luke xviii. 8.

in the battle with a vesture dipped in blood. He is not at ease, neither they that are with Him.

"*In one day*" shall her plagues come upon her—and again stated, "in a moment, in one day."² This suddenness is the great characteristic carried out from the Babylon of old, whose destruction came upon her suddenly as a snare and a net; how to be fulfilled in this, the antitype, is a great mystery; but, with regard to God's moral dealings, throughout the Scriptures the evil that overtakes sinners living at ease is constantly described as sudden. "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of."³ It is mentioned as a law of God's moral government, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy."⁴ "It is," says Aretas, "the sudden coming of Christ as a thief."

But while the suddenness is from the type of Babylon, "*death, and mourning, and famine*" are from the fall of the local and literal Jerusalem, here coming forth again as ghostly shadows in the doom of the spiritual Jerusalem, which has become as Babylon: they are the red horse, and the black, and the pale of the four Seals.⁵ And though not expressly mentioned, it is implied that He also on the white horse is together with them; for it is added, "*For strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.*" Thus of the antichristian powers that burn her with fire, it is said: "God hath put in their hearts." "I will give thee into their hand."⁶ And thus we had before: "it was given unto him" "to have power"—"to blaspheme"—"to make war"—and "to overcome."⁷ "It was given;" as nothing

² Isa. xlvii. 9.

³ Matt. xxiv. 50.

⁴ Prov. xxix. 1.

⁵ See page 80.

⁶ Ezek. xvi. 39.

⁷ Rev. xiii. 5, 7.

is without the overruling hand of God. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"⁸

SECTION IX

THE LAMENT OVER BABYLON

CHAP. XVIII. "⁹ And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ Standing afar off for the fear of her torments, saying, Alas, alas that great city, Babylon! that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: ¹² Merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and of marble, ¹³ And cinnamon, and amomum, and odours of incense, and aromatics, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. ¹⁴ And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and never, never more shalt thou find them at all. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing; ¹⁶ And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! ¹⁷ For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and every one at the place as he saileth by, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, ¹⁸ And cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city* is like unto the great city! ¹⁹ And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate."

"Then the Heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon."¹ So divinely sad and pathetic

⁸ Amos iii. 6.

¹ Jer. li. 48.

throughout is this lament : there is nothing in any language more mournful and afflicting than these sorrows over the faithless Church that had made itself a friend of the world which had crucified her Lord. "At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations."²

The lamentation passes imperceptibly into that which is descriptive not of Babylon, but of Tyre ; the depth and breadth of meaning in the Apocalypse is such that it must indicate some especial reference in the latter ages to maritime nations, in which the corruption of the Church will extend. "In their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?"³ "Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones—they shall clothe themselves with trembling—they shall sit upon the ground—and be astonished at thee."⁴ Here the "clothe themselves with trembling" is no less powerfully expressed by the "*standing afar off*." For the expression, "all the company in ships," Griesbach has restored the more ancient and genuine reading, "*every one that saileth by the place*" (ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων, not ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων ὁ ὄμιλος, ver. 17), which is not only more beautiful and poetical in itself, but more scriptural—as "every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head."⁵ And of Nineveh, "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly—how is she become a desolation ! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss."⁶

The fall of Babylon and Tyre and those cities of old must be typical of something yet to be in the failing and falling of the world and a Church allied to it. Else why

² Jer. l. 46.

³ Ezek. xxvii. 32.

⁴ Ezek. xxvi. 16.

⁵ Jer. xviii. 16.

⁶ Zeph. ii. 15.

those long and pathetic laments in the Old Testament? Tyre itself is especially selected by our Lord, to show that her judgment falls short of that which will be on Christian cities. The Christian city passes into Tyre: the Tyre of the last ages is to be restored, and sing as an harlot; and that after the mysterious seventy years, like that of Jerusalem, which indicates restoration. "Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. After the end of seventy years the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord."⁷ Thus it seems to pass as it were with Jerusalem and with Babylon into the Christian kingdom, to the building up and the corrupting of the temple of God. "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift."⁸ And thus, too, the varied emblems prevent our fixing them on one city, whether Babylon, or Rome, or Jerusalem, or Tyre, and pass into nothing less extensive than the corruption of the one visible kingdom of Christ, wherein even Jezebel, the daughter of Tyre, hath come with her idolatries. "And hath space given her to repent; but she repented not."⁹ Of Tyre itself it is said; "The city of confusion is broken down:"¹ as if in Tyre there were another Babylon. Both alike types of this great mystery.

The characteristic of this "*fornication*" is the selling themselves for gold, as the Greek word signifies. Therefore with such wonderful force and emphasis of accumulation is every species of this merchandise mentioned, running up all into one head, "*the souls of men.*" Like that in the

⁷ Isa. xxiii. 17, 18.

⁸ Ps. xlv. 13.

⁹ Rev. ii. 20, 21.

¹ Isa. xxiv. 10.

prophet, "Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures ; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols."² And it must be observed that all these things which are so minutely particularized, as expressive of the meshes of that net by which men's souls are taken, have also their place in the new Jerusalem, where every jewel is specified by name, and the gold of its streets, and the fine linen, and the incense, and the wine, and the oil, its white horses also. In both alike must they stand for spiritual merchandise of good and evil, the false riches and the true. We found the same in the Harlot Church of Ezekiel, which is clothed of God with ornaments, and jewels, and gold, and silver ; but the condemnation is, "Thou hast taken what I had given thee, and made thyself images."³ But on the mere possession of these riches, so manifold in their variety and extent, is the judgment : riches are mentioned, without allusion to any sin further than selfish possession. He was "clothed in purple and fine linen." His "ground brought forth plentifully."⁴ Laodicea saith, "I am rich, and increased with goods."⁵ It may be as opposite to Christ Crucified, and therefore not having the first Beatitude, which is the golden gate of the kingdom.

"The addition of '*the souls of men*,'" says Aretas, "indicates that it is not any one city which is spoken of, but all creation in the change from this corruptible life to the incorruptible." And on the expression, "*the merchants of the earth*," he says, "we must from hence consider the prophecies not of Babylon, nor of Rome, either old or new, nor of any one city, but of the whole of this

² See Isa. ii. 7, 8.

³ Ezek. xvi. 17.

⁴ Luke xii. 16 ; xvi. 19.

⁵ Rev. iii. 17.

perishable world, in which they that have trafficked in things temporal will be overtaken by wailing and sorrow." And of "*the great city clothed in purple*," he says, "from things known he affords the knowledge of what is to be hereafter; for since Babylon is well known as exceedingly elated by wealth, he brings these things to our view by picturing the calamity of her royal throne: dwelling not only on the greatness of her wealth, and sorrow at its loss, but also on the suddenness of its destruction. For the Lord's coming will be with the lightning's speed, bringing to naught this laborious life."

Much truth as there is in this taking Babylon for a type of the world, yet it is too vague and general; we need something more definite, arising in the world, and out of the world, and again to depart, that it should be lamented over by kings and rich men when gone by. It is a mystery appearing in the world such as to astonish an Apostle, and suddenly to vanish from it amidst the mourning of those that remain. It is like what we might call a Church married to the world. But Scripture does not allow of this expression. For a Church is holy, and marriage is holy. It is a word of abomination and defilement which expresses the mystery of confusion.

The expression "*in one hour*" is thrice repeated (ver. 10, 17, 19), as well as that of "*in one day*." It is like the pathetic lament of the poet:

"Omnia ademit
Una dies infesta tibi tot præmia vitæ."⁶

That awful suddenness, of which God's judgments often partake, as seen in the retrospect. "Like unto a dream when one awaketh." "So shalt thou make their image to

⁶ Luc. iii. 911.

vanish.” “Oh, how suddenly!” exclaims the Psalmist. “His calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.”⁷

“Note,” says Bede, “that in each case it is not only the loss of the riches, but the sudden and unforeseen ruin of their deceiving life that they bewail.” “They shall mourn the failing of all things that minister to the bodily senses, or are suited to external uses, and of slaves and beasts of burden, those auxiliaries of humanity, either by the perishing of the world, or by survivors mourning over those who have lost by death the joys of the world.” Berengaudus—that “if you carefully look into all these things enumerated, you will find that they relate to the five bodily senses, which are given to animals for the support of life, to man for the guiding of the soul therein by reason to the way of righteousness; and the enumeration of these things proves that the condemnation of the wicked will consist mostly in the riches that nourish their vices.” This allusion to the five senses indicates the universality of these temptations.

As supplying a comment on this passage, at this time Christian nations are unable to unite in a common faith or worship, and any attempt to do so realizes the City of Confusion, *i.e.* Babylon; but they have found one bond of union, of which the emblem is this Tyre of the seas; the result of which has been a striking accumulation—an amazing glittering aggregate—such as is described with singular power in this language of the Christian prophet.

There is something especially mournful in the fall of great cities, as in that celebrated passage of antiquity: “On returning from Asia, as I sailed from Ægina towards Megara, I began to look on the regions around. Behind

⁷ Prov. vi. 15.

me was Ægina, before Megara, on the right hand Piræus, on the left was Corinth; cities which at one time were most flourishing, now they lay before the eyes prostrate and in ruins."⁸ And the reflections founded on this touch the deepest chord in our nature, as evidencing the primeval curse upon the ground; and when with these nations Christianity itself has become incorporated, when Churches have made them their own and become blended with them, infinitely more mournful is the change. All the pathetic descriptions of falling kingdoms in Scripture verge and centre on the one Sacred City. And even there it is on the ruin of the Temple we are moved more than on all Jerusalem beside. "Master, what stones and what buildings are here!" And their fall is bound up in the fall of the world.

Again; there are three sets of mourners over this manifold accumulation of ruin, the kings, the merchants, and the sailors, which indicate the universality of the judgment; for it is not like that of Sodom, confined to one or two cities; nor like that of Babylon, of one inland empire; but throughout the world, of all kingdoms. The ruin of the visible Church breaks all the framework of society, and with it kingdoms fall; and kings, and rich men, and men of all traffic bewail.

Although it be impossible to understand altogether why this wonderful lamentation should enter into the description of Christendom, or in what it is to be fulfilled, yet we may see things bearing in this direction; of which this may be mentioned as a sign. Heathen philosophers considered the end of government to be virtue; Christian politicians consider wealth to be.

It is evident that not only does the Harlot Church

⁸ Epist. Sulpic. Cicer.

herself sit as a queen, proud and unrepenting, but that she is greatly corrupted in her members by a heart "gone after covetousness" and alienated from God. But Berengaudus, together with Haymo and others, explain "merchants" of those who traffic in holy things. And certainly merchandise is thus used of the souls of men and of the word of God. "Denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing on themselves swift destruction. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."⁹ To this must be added, above all, that our Lord's last awful visitation of His temple will be on those who make the same "an house of merchandise."

"²⁰ Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye saints and apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."

This verse is taken from the conclusion of Moses's prophecy, as it occurs in the Greek version: "Rejoice, ye heavens, together with him;—and let all the sons of God be strong in Him, for the blood of His children is avenged."¹ It has here also a reference to two previous passages of the Apocalypse, the prayer of the Martyrs, under the fifth Seal, before the destruction of Jerusalem; and the same carried on in the third Vial, where the Angel of the altar acknowledges the fulfilment, and the righteous judgments of God."²

The people of God must always, as such, suffer persecution; and if the world in which they live has become Christian, therefore of the Christian world they thus suffer. Of the Apostle's declaration, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."³

⁹ 2 Peter ii. 1, 3.

¹ Εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοί. Deut. xxxii. 43; LXX.

² See p. 281.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

St. Augustin says, "We must consider that there are no times in which this is not the case. For when those that are without are not raging, and there appears to be tranquillity, yet there are never wanting many who torment the hearts of those who live religiously." "Thus," he concludes, "from the time of Abel, even unto the end, amidst the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, the Church advances onward on her pilgrimage."⁴

"²¹ And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

Very expressive is this casting of the "*stone*" by, "*a strong angel*" into the mighty waters, which from the Euphrates of the prophet have here become a "*sea*;" and connected, also, by the term "*millstone*," with our Lord's own expression of those that offend His little ones.⁵ For such is this Babylon; as destroying the little ones of God's people like as the Babylon of old.⁶

The passage in the prophet is the foundation of this: "When thou hast made an end of reading this book, thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink."⁷ Here the book, full of the words of God, contained more than that visible Babylon; it was replete with the judgment of the mystical harlot, it was the Babylon of the Book which was thus to perish. She with "the golden cup," "dwelling on many waters."

Again; that this Babylon represents unrighteousness in the Christian Church is shown by the passage applied to her in Zechariah: "the flying roll" of the angel goes

⁴ De Civ. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 51.

⁵ Matt. xviii. 6.

⁶ Ps. cxxxvii. 9.

⁷ Jer. li. 63, 64.

before, containing the curses of the Law on stealing and perjury, or the judgments of God on the impenitent in the Gospel, that "witness unto all nations;" and this is followed by that vision of the ephah and the woman sitting in the midst of it, carried, and built as an house in the land of Shinar. "This is an ephah that goeth forth. This is their resemblance through all the earth." "This is wickedness."⁸ Implying both the universal nature of this new Babylon of the prophets, the harlot going forth from the holy land; and indicating by the ephah "the resemblance" and very character of the "wickedness," in keeping with the Babylon the type of covetousness, and the Tyre of merchandise; for the ephah, or measure, is the very emblem of mercantile traffic.

"²² And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; ²³ And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee. For thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived."

The ear is arrested with the exquisite beauty of the language and the "*no more at all*," so often repeated, most affectingly: and the figures so descriptive of a city full of life contrasted with the stillness and desolation that ensues—in one hour—and for ever. One is never weary of reading language in itself so beautiful, yet withal so awe-inspiring, so purifying in its effect, so sweet the solemn music of the words. And if in this Babylon there be a hidden Jerusalem, these expressions of melody and "*of harpers*" may contain a typical reference to sacred liturgies

⁸ Zech. v. 2, 11.

and services which shall cease ; the Candlestick removed, the Light of the Lamb withdrawn, "*the voice of the*" Heavenly "*Bridegroom and of the Bride*" in the Canticles. The buyers and sellers are cast out of the Temple. And the Blood of Christ and of the Prophets is on you.

And this is confirmed on attention to the scriptural language of this lament : for it again returns to the Sacred City as the burden of all ; it takes up the mournful strain of Jerusalem ; for these expressions occur no less than four times in the Prophet Jeremiah, as spoken of the desolation of the Holy City. "I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the candle."⁹ And it would appear as if these were spoken, in some degree, with a reference to the service of the Temple ; for in speaking of the promised restoration to "the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride," it is added, "the voice of them that shall say, "Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good—and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord."¹

Her covetousness is again implied—"for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived:" these expressions designedly mark the Tyre and the Nineveh of the prophets—Tyre, "the crowning city, whose merchants were princes ;"² and Nineveh, "the mistress of witchcrafts ;"³ both types of the days of merchandise polluting the Christian Church with "the whoredoms and witchcrafts of Jezebel."⁴ And this as in fulfilment of the threatened vengeance upon her,

⁹ Jer. xxv. 10 ; vii. 34 ; xvi. 9.

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 11.

² Isa. xxiii. 8.

³ Nahum iii. 4.

⁴ 2 Kings ix. 22.

"I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation ; . . . and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins."⁵ For as the Balaam of the seven epistles was the forerunner of the false prophet—so Jezebel of the great harlot, Babylon.

"²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

It had been stated before, in the twentieth verse, that this Babylon has in her the blood of the "*Prophets*," of Apostles, and of "*Saints*;" and here with the remarkable addition "*of all that were slain upon the earth*." "From this passage," says Aretas, "we are confirmed that the prophecy is of the world, and not of one city." And Cæcumenius; "That it would be suitably explained of one kingdom which has had sway from the beginning to the present time, as having shed the blood of Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs. For they are spoken of as one company, one army, and one city, though they who fulfil these things succeed each other. Thus it is one kingdom, though divided into many times and places."

But to ascertain what this city is, we must refer as usual to Scripture; and our Lord's words are, that of Jerusalem will be required the blood of Prophets, and of Apostles, and of all the blood shed from that of righteous Abel.⁶ The only question, therefore, is in what Jerusalem is continued; for this passage marks it most emphatically as the same. It must be that city which slew the prophets: and the very expression, "O Jerusalem, that killest the prophets!" is proverbial, and cannot pass from it. It is declared that "it cannot be that a prophet perish out of

⁵ Rev. ii. 22, 23.

⁶ Luke xi. 49, 51; Matt. xxxiii. 29, 36.

Jerusalem.”⁷ Therefore it must be Jerusalem in some sense still which is here meant ; and the harlot of Ezekiel and the prophets is too closely interwoven throughout as by any possibility to admit of separation. If it be asked, How can the blood of saints shed by heathen Rome be required of this mystical Jerusalem? it is the same as to ask how the blood of Abel could be required of Jerusalem. It may be explained in this, our Lord says that Nineveh and the Southern Queen should rise in judgment and condemn that generation to which His Gospel is preached in vain. In this manner the heavier judgment will swallow up the less. As the Christian Israel inherits the promises of the Israel of old being grafted into that stock, so does it also inherit the judgments : for this reason are they so intimately combined throughout the words of this book. This is the mystery of the judgments on children’s children, and the consequence of being of the true family of Abraham. Jerusalem of the prophets still lives on and fills up the measure of their fathers, as Christ foretold. Thus it is here stated that her sins had “reached unto Heaven” (ver. 5), as by accumulation from of old ; and that she “came in remembrance before God” (chap. xvi. 19), as bringing up the old forgotten sins of that one and only harlot city of the Scriptures.

The words of St. John are weighed in the balance, and he states that “*in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*” she must, therefore, either be Jerusalem or a continuation of her ; for “the blood of all the prophets from the foundation of the world” was required of Jerusalem. It is required of Jerusalem, it is required of Babylon ; therefore Jerusalem is swallowed up in Babylon, as succeeding

⁷ Luke xiii. 33.

to her in intimate union and relation, so that they may be designated by one and the same name. The blood of Abel was not required of heathen Rome, but of Jerusalem. The blessings of Abraham rest on the Christian—the curses of the Law rest on the unfaithful Jerusalem unto the end. The difference is this; she that sat on one mountain now sits on seven. She that was “the Harlot” of the prophets has become “the Mother of Harlots.” The Jerusalem of old is called, as by a proverbial name, “the bloody city.”⁸ Her counterpart is “drunk with blood,” whatever she be.

“Perceive ye the great mystery,” says St. Augustin, “and bear in mind what I quoted, ‘not first that which is spiritual, but that which is natural, afterwards the spiritual.’ Cain built a city where no city was; but when Jerusalem was built, it was in a place where there was a city at first, which was called Jebus.”⁹ “This Jerusalem,” he says, “was to set in form, and shadow forth things future, ‘the vision of peace, and the city of God.’” Thus is it throughout the Apocalypse: there is a new Jerusalem coming out of the old, though born from above; and the old is as a city of Canaan, even as Sodom, and Egypt, and Babylon. She is marked as the harlot of the Prophets, and also as the old Jerusalem in the Gospels, as may be seen by comparing her description with the Woes on the Pharisees, and the character of their sins.

“She hath glorified herself”
(xviii. 7).

“She saith in her heart, I sit
a queen” (xviii. 7).

She is “arrayed in purple”
(xvii. 4).

“Ye are they which justify
yourselves.”

“They love to be called, Rabbi,
Rabbi.”

“Which love to go in long
clothing.”

⁸ Ezek. xxiv. 6, 9.

⁹ In Ps. lxii. 7.

She is "drunken with the blood of the saints" (xvii. 6).

"Having a golden cup, full of abominations" (xvii. 4).

Carried on the Beast "out of the bottomless pit," which "goeth into perdition" (xvii. 8).

"The Mother of Harlots" (xvii. 5).

"Children of them which killed the prophets."

"Make clean the outside of the cup," "within full of extortion and excess."

They "compass sea and land to make one proselyte," and "make him the child of hell."

"An adulterous generation."

They are both "beautiful without," both "highly esteemed among men." Their characters are interwoven throughout; and the judgment of the one is the very type of the other. It has been before observed, the Harlot is nowhere said to speak blasphemy or deny the Son. The Scribes and Pharisees would never have been esteemed in man's judgment to be so bad as they are pronounced by Christ Himself to be; though, indeed, "the children of their father the devil." Our Lord says to His disciples, "the time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service;" which implies that it will be under some species of religion that His martyrs will be slain. It has been suggested that the trials of the martyrs under Antichrist may exceed those of the primitive martyrs, not in any bodily sufferings, but by the plea of religion under which they will be put to death as unfaithful to Christ.

It is possible that even her being "drunken with the blood of saints" may have a spiritual meaning, and not literal; for she is "the city in which the Lord was crucified"¹ not literally but mystically, in that He is therein set at naught and crucified in His members. The devil is "a murderer from the beginning" in a worse sense

¹ Chap. xi. 8.

than that of killing the body. And such is a golden cup of seductions—poisoning the soul, not the body. But it may well be, as Bede observes,² that the two evils of the Harlot are corrupting the bad and persecuting the good.

Without entering into the subject of idolatry, thus much may be added from Lacunza. “When the Messiah appeared in Jerusalem there was not found in it any idol. That crime of ancient Jerusalem had been purged away. The external service of religion went forward, continual sacrifice, prayer at set times, fasts, festivals, and the Sabbath, all scrupulously observed: and there were in the city many just men, of whom mention is made in the Gospels; the city really was, as it was called, the Holy City. Nevertheless it was in the sight of God in so wicked a state that the Messiah ‘wept over it,’ and uttered against it that terrible anathema, the prophecy of her ruin.”³

“This prophecy was fully accomplished. Nor was it required that the city should return to her ancient idolatry, nor that she should have fallen into the hands of any Gentile power, who might root out of her the true religion. Nothing of this kind was necessary; Jerusalem was punished, not for idolatry, but for iniquity; not for her ancient crimes, but for those which the Lord had reprehended, especially in her priesthood.”

² On chap. xix. 2.

³ Luke xix. 43, 44.

PART VI

Scenes in Heaven ; or, Christ with His Elect

SECTION I

THANKSGIVING IN HEAVEN

CHAP. XIX. “¹And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia; the salvation, and the glory, and the power of our God; ²For true and righteous *are* His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication; and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. ³And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke riseth up for ever and ever. ⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four Living Creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. ⁵And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. ⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

RAPID transition, and vast change unexpectedly displayed, is mentioned by a critical writer as an instance of the sublime in nature, as in the sudden passing from scenes of dreariness into an extensive prospect of manifold beauty. Such feelings are connected with things more deep than human philosophy can fathom. But as this Divine Book is the most exalted of all books from

the truths with which it is conversant, so does it abound in instances of this sublimity.

The Vision of the Blessed occurs, as usual, as the centre of light to the whole description. All is contrast: for the silence and desolation of Babylon, the multitudinous song of the heavenly Jerusalem; for earthly shadows, the "*Amen*;" for wailing, the "*Alleluia*;" for the darkness below, the everlasting light of the Lamb; for the Harlot, the Virgin Bride. "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept:" but now the waters of Babylon and the weeping are gone by, and the song of Sion is heard in Heaven. It is remarkable how in Scripture joy and thanksgiving is connected with the Judgment. "Show yourselves joyful before the Lord;" "for He cometh to judge the earth."¹ The "*Amen*" and "*Allelujah*," *i.e.* the very service of the Jewish Temple, carried on in Heaven; the song of Moses and of the Lamb; and with that concert of heart and voice so strikingly described in the primitive Church at the Easter festivals. "In these days," says St. Augustin, "throughout the world the Amen and Allelujah is sung."² And St. Jerome also, "the Amen and Allelujah, in likeness of the heavenly thunderings." That full harmonious response of the Churches in their day, which St. Basil and St. Ambrose compare to the noise of the sea on the shore.³ "Heaven is made up," says St. Augustin, "of Amen and Allelujah, that is, it is all Truth and Praise."⁴ Thus it is said of the New Jerusalem, "All her streets shall say, Alleluia."⁵ And "thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."⁶ It may here be observed as high sanction of

¹ Ps. xeviii.

² Enarr. in Ps. xxi. 24.

³ Hexaemeron.

⁴ Serm. cclv. and Serm. cccxlxi. 29.

⁵ Tobit xiii. 18.

⁶ Isa. lx. 18.

the primitive liturgies, that their counterpart should be found in the service of Heaven. Aretas well notices that the Allelujah thrice repeated, like the thrice Holy of the Seraphic Hymn in Isaiah, is expressive of the Trinity; while the Allelujah again added to close the triple confession speaks of the One Lord. Something similar has been observed in the Te Deum.

It is the custom in the Apocalypse for short incidental mention to occur of something which is afterwards made prominent and expanded into the scene of a vision; and so it is here. Thus "the Beast out of the bottomless pit" was mentioned, and Babylon was mentioned, and afterwards they form a separate subject; so here in the preceding lament over Babylon, it was inserted, "Rejoice over her, thou Heaven!"⁷ and now that rejoicing is described. And not only this, but a closer attention to the former expression (chap. xviii. 20) will serve to explain the distinctive parts of this thanksgiving. First of all we have "*a great voice of much people in Heaven;*" this is evidently the "innumerable company of Angels," and corresponds with those first words, "Rejoice over her, thou Heaven!" It is expressly for His "*judgment*" on "*the great Whore*" that they here rejoice. Secondly, it is carried on by "*the twenty-four Elders,*" together with "*the four Living Creatures;*" thus to the expression, "Rejoice, thou Heaven!" was added, "and ye Apostles and Prophets," which are the twenty-four in the Christian Church. And thirdly, the voice of "the Saints" echoes back the same in full response, here described as "*the servants*" of God, "*both small and great;*" and their "*voice*" is as that of "*many waters,*" which seems to express many people and nations on earth, in distinction from the voice of Angels in Heaven.

⁷ See page 365.

It must here be observed, that this thanksgiving is not at the termination of all things, but in the kingdom of Heaven as now in its progress upon earth. For it is followed by "the Word of God" going forth with "a sharp sword out of His mouth" to contend with His enemies; and it is indicated in this vision by the presence of "the four Living Creatures," which are not found in that vision in Heaven of the seventh Trumpet which is spoken of as "the time of the dead," of their being "judged," and "of giving reward."⁸

It has been noticed that the judgments of Babylon are always of temporal destruction; nor is the expression, "*her smoke riseth up for ever and ever*," contrary to this, for it alludes to the passage in the prophet where it occurs in speaking of the overthrow of cities such as Sodom, where to this ascending of "the smoke for ever" it is added, that "from generation to generation it shall lie waste."⁹ And it here refers to that "smoke of her burning" twice spoken of in the previous chapter as seen by the kings and merchants of the earth, and therefore of temporal judgment (chap. xviii. 9-18). A similar expression is used of eternal torments; "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever," but that is "with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the Angels and of the Lamb" (chap. xiv. 10, 11), as spoken of those who have worshipped the Beast, "the son of perdition." The pathetic lament over Babylon is of this world's glory extinguished.

⁸ Rev. xi. 18. See page 205.

⁹ Isa. xxxiv. 10.

SECTION II

THE BRIDE

CHAP. XIX. “⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am the fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

At the fall of Jerusalem was the coming of Christ in His kingdom; and now, at the fall of the mystic Babylon, “*the marriage of the Lamb is come; and His wife hath made herself ready.*” And this confirms the view that the Church visible has for a time become lost in the Harlot: the Apostolic Woman had fled into the wilderness and disappeared from sight, and in her stead was seen the Harlot; and now, at her destruction, the Virgin Bride again appears. And the account of the Harlot identifies what she once had been made of God with this description of the Bride. “I looked upon thee, yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee; I washed thee with water, and I girded thee about with *fine linen.*”¹ The five foolish virgins are rejected; the five that were wise enter in to “*the marriage supper of the Lamb.*” “*The marriage of the Lamb,*” as intimating union for ever with Christ: and the fulfilment of the mystery, “they two shall be one flesh.” “The happiness of the saved,” says

¹ Ezek. xvi. 8-10.

the Greek expositor, "is variously described to express its manifold blessings: it is compared to a feast from the abundance of joy; to a heavenly kingdom from its glory and honour; to Paradise from its never-failing good; to the bosom of Abraham from the rest of those who have ceased from labour; to a nuptial chamber and marriage, not only from its unceasing joy, but also from the pure love of God to men."

The similar form of expression, "*Write*, Blessed are they which are called," seems designedly to connect it with the former "*Write*, Blessed are the dead."² And in both cases a Divine confirmation is added: in one it is, "Yea, saith the Spirit;" in the other, "*These are the true sayings of God.*"

The question is, what is the calling which this refers to; it had been said before (chap. xvii. 14) that they that are with the Lamb are "*called*," in His going forth to war, and they are afterwards spoken of as "*clothed in fine linen*," which is here the clothing of the Bride. The Gospel itself is, we know, in some sense "the Marriage Supper," and there is a blessedness pronounced on its reception; as, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."³ And because it comes down from above, "Blessed art though; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven."⁴ It is, therefore, the knowledge of the Word of God. But the time is here marked in some degree by the expression, "*His wife hath made herself ready*;" it is on her coming out of Babylon (chap. xviii. 4) purified as gold "seven times in the fire" of those trials; "the branch beautiful and glorious;" the remnant, "every one written among the living in Jerusalem;" the daughter of Zion, washed

² See p. 257.

³ Luke x. 23.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 17.

and purged "by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning."⁵ Yet it is not the end of all things; for there is afterwards the going forth of all the armies of good and evil.

She that had fled to the wilderness, and was lost for a time, is now returning; in her place we have seen the Harlot: it is all as described in the Prophet Hosea, "Plead with your mother; for she is not my wife; let her put her whoredoms out of her sight. For their mother had played the harlot; for she said, I will go after my lovers." And then we found her judgment: "Now I will cause all her mirth to cease. I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, saith the Lord." But all is now again changed. "I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth." "It shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi" (*i.e.* my husband). "And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness." "I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."⁶

It appears here like a termination: "*These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him.*" And the same again occurs at another apparent completion (chap. xxii. 9). This end before the end, followed by resuming the subject, much resembles the same in St. John's Gospel, which seems to terminate with the chapter before the last, and then, after some addition, comes again to a similar conclusion.

"*The spirit of prophecy is to bear witness to Jesus,*" or *to the Son*, according to another reading. Therefore that interpretation of the Apocalypse is the best which

⁵ Isa. iv. 2-4.

⁶ See Hosea chap. ii. throughout.

approaches most nearly to Christ Crucified, as seen in union or in contrast with Him; not the history of heathen Rome, or of its kings, or of the nations which compose or destroy it; but of Christ only, and what is opposed to Him or falls away from Him in Antichrist and the Harlot, for these enter into all time and place to which the knowledge of Christ can extend. To understand prophecy is to behold as in a glass darkly the glory of Christ, and to be conformed to Him. Aretas says; "This knowledge of prophecy is not mine, but belongs to the confession of Christ in my fellow-servants. For it is that which supplies the prophetic spirit." The two passages explain each other. The other is, "I am a fellow-servant to thee and to thy brethren the prophets;" in other words, as here expressed, "*to thee and thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.*"

It seems to imply that by the Incarnation Angels and men have one common Lord, "the Man Christ Jesus;" they are His "ministering spirits, sent to minister to the heirs of salvation." They "desire to look into" the things of our salvation. St. John's repeating the circumstance afterwards, together with the prohibition, affords it an additional weight; yet, at the same time, St. John himself having offered such reverential homage, indicates that such an act, although forbidden, is not of the nature of heathen idolatry, for of such St. John would have been incapable. But St. Augustin mentions it as a proof how painful such worship is to good Angels; in like manner as it is shown by Paul and Barnabas among the Lycaonians⁷ how hateful it is to good men; whereas it is exacted by proud and evil spirits, both men and devils.⁸ St. Gregory

⁷ Acts. xiv. 7-17.

⁸ See Contra Faust. lib. xx. cap. xxi.

mentions this as an instance that after the Incarnation an Angel will not suffer himself to be adored; an homage not forbidden before.⁹

SECTION III

THE ARMY OF CHRIST

CHAP. XIX. “¹¹ And I saw Heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. ¹² His eyes *were* as a flame of fire; and on His head *were* many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knoweth but He Himself. ¹³ And He *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies *which were* in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ And He hath on *His* vesture, and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

After the judgment of Babylon the vision of the Bride is introduced as a support under that sad picture; and now the account returns to Antichrist with the ten kings who had destroyed Babylon, and are left as it were with none to resist them; but *Heaven opens*, and the *army* of the Lamb is seen. He had gone forth under the First Seal on the “*white horse*,” “conquering and to conquer;” and now He is again seen with the “*many crowns*” He hath won—as of Saints that reign with Him by suffering, as “*King of kings*,” and with the “*raiment of blood*” showing the nature of His kingdom: while the “*armies on white horses*” follow the Captain of their salvation. In the remarkable

⁹ (Josh. v. 14.) In Job, lib. xxvii. cap. xv.

words of the Prophet, His "sword shall be bathed in Heaven."¹

St. Paul describes the Christian in this warfare "with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," with weapons offensive and defensive, "the sword of the Spirit" and "the helmet of salvation;" but here it is to be observed that arms of warfare are assigned alone to the Word of God—"the sword from His mouth," and the "rod of iron;" but the armies that follow Him are "without sword, or spear,"² or iron mail, "*clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*" And the enemies that are slain are by "the sword of Him that sat upon the horse" (ver. 21). "Stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord." "The Lord shall fight for you."³ But the armies with which they contend, as seen in the sixth Trumpet, have breast-plates, and lion mouths, breathing flame, and scorpion stings. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."⁴

"*He hath a Name written, that no man knoweth but He Himself;*" as the high priest had on his forehead,⁵ the incomprehensible Name, His Godhead. "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (chap. ii. 17); the knowledge of God, which the Son alone can reveal.⁶ Unknown yet well known—unknown in the unspeakable Name; well known in the garment dyed with blood, even as after the Resurrection He was known by His wounds; well known as He whom the Prophet had described as red in His apparel, and all His raiment stained

¹ Isa. xxxiv. 5.

² 1 Sam. xii. 22.

³ Exod. xiv. 13, 14.

⁴ Rev. xiii. 10.

⁵ Exod. xxviii. 38.

⁶ Matt. xi. 27.

with blood.⁷ For on His vesture of blood and on His thigh is His Name that is known, *i.e.* in His human nature and in His sufferings, in the Incarnation, as the Son of Man in His kingdom. "For by the mystery of His birth and by His Passion," says Bede, "His Kingship is to us revealed." "The Name unknown," says the Greek commentator, "is His substance beyond comprehension; for in His dispensations He has many names, as the Shepherd, the Sun, the Light, the Life, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption; and in negations, as incorruptible, unseen, immortal; but in His substance He has no Name." "Why askest thou thus after My Name, seeing it is secret?"⁸

St. Jerome speaks of the white horse as the Body our Lord assumed after the Resurrection, and those that follow on white horses as with bodies like Himself, immortal and incorruptible.⁹ In another place, of Him on the white horse as Christ borne on His Apostles, according to His promise; "Behold, I am with you unto the end of the world."¹ St. Gregory calls this army the multitude of Saints in the war of martyrdom, with white horses as bright with the light of righteousness and purity.²

The description is made up of emblems connecting it with the other Scriptures and with other parts of the Apocalypse. The White Horse issuing from Heaven was before the destruction of Jerusalem; this before its great antitype, the end of the world; that Horseman alone, this with many like Himself, indicating the fulfilment of His promises, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;"³ "to him will I give power;"

⁷ Isa. lxiii. 1, 2.

⁸ Judges xiii. 18.

⁹ In Isa. lxvi.

¹ In Habacuc iii.

² In Job xxxix. 18.

³ Rev. iii. 5.

"he shall sit with Me."⁴ He is "*called Faithful and True*," as "the faithful and true Witness;" and "*in righteousness doth He judge*," as indicating the Incarnate Son described by Isaiah, "with righteousness shall He judge the poor;" "and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked;"⁵ which is here "*the sword*" going "*out of His mouth*." And *His eyes as a flame of fire*, to connect it with "the Son of Man" in the first vision; and with "the Son of God,"⁶ Who comes to visit Jezebel and her children. His name is unknown. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."⁷ Then His attributes as well known among men are thrice mentioned. It is "*the Word of God*," referring to the Gospel of St. John; and the "*King of kings, and Lord of lords*," as the Lamb that overcomes the ten kings of Antichrist. Many other connections will be seen with all Scripture.

"While that night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word leaped down from Heaven out of Thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought Thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up filled all things with death."⁸

But who are these with Him? "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"⁹ "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the

⁴ Rev. ii. 27; iii. 21.

⁵ Isa. xi. 4.

⁶ Rev. i. 13, 14; ii. 18.

⁷ Isa. xlv. 15.

⁸ Wisdom xviii. 14-16.

⁹ Isa. lx. 8.

Lord. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires."¹ They are perhaps the two Witnesses, as seen in Heaven;² they are the "Kings of the East" in the sixth Vial; they are those that tread the "wine-press;" they are the "called, and chosen, and faithful" with the Lamb when He overcomes;³ they are, perhaps, the people called out from the ruins of Babylon; they are those that escape the mark of the Beast; they are as the sealed ones in the fall of Jerusalem; as those gathered to be with the Lamb on Mount Sion, and to follow Him whithersoever He goeth; as those selected one by one out of the Seven Churches, and spoken of, each separately, as "he that overcometh," or he that "keepeth his garments." "Blessed is he that watcheth."

The first Christians entered the kingdom by the first Beatitude, being "poor in spirit;" these perhaps more by the last, being "persecuted for righteousness' sake." And "great their reward in Heaven;" it is supposed beyond all martyrs. But here, as they have no armour, neither do they wear crowns. In other places they are kings, they sit on thrones, they wear crowns, which they cast down at the feet of Him that sat on the throne: but here they wear no crowns—they are still as warriors in the midst of the contest; and all their kingdom and their righteousness is in Him.

This order of events is seen in Zechariah (chap. xiv. 2, 3, 7), first against Jerusalem, then against the nations; when it is added mysteriously, "My God shall come, and all the Saints with Thee."

¹ Isa. xxiv. 13-15.

² Rev. xi. 3.

³ Rev. xiv. 20; xvii. 14.

SECTION IV

INVITATION TO THE FOWLS

CHAP. XIX. “¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of Heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God ; ¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all, both free and bond, both small and great. ¹⁹ And I saw the Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. ²⁰ And the Beast was taken, and the false prophet who *was* with him, that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceedeth out of His mouth : and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered : but here the greatness and the consummation is indicated ; “*all the fowls that fly in mid Heaven :*” and the summons is from one “*standing in the sun*”—the most awfully sublime of all expressions—in the eye of the whole universe : it is the great Epiphany. The first Epiphany was by a star, this in the sun. The invitation is to the fowls, the eagle-spirits of Heaven : ye holy souls that hunger after righteousness, come now and behold the righteous judgments of God. This is Bede’s mode of understanding it. And Tichonius—that it has been going on through the period of the Church. The call to the fowls seems intended as our clue to connect it with the same memorable call in Ezekiel,¹ where it is that mysterious gathering of Gog and Magog in the last

¹ Ezek. xxxix. 17. See the whole chapter.

days against the Israel of God ; and the restoration of Israel ; by which we are enabled to identify it with their appearance in the next chapter ; indicating that it is the same thing which is signified in the two descriptions. The "*Beast*" and his "*kings*" are expressly mentioned, and "*the armies*" on horses indicate the same as were going forth in the sixth Trumpet without a leader. Principles of evil extending and deepening, and at length developing their heads, to whom they are united. The kings of the East are with Christ ; with Antichrist the kings of the earth. In like manner, the expression of "*treading the wine-press*" proves that, under another form of description, it is the same as the treading of the wine-press before (chap. xiv. 20), and the armies of horse there intimated. The false prophet is to the last with the Beast : this may be that connection with religion so often expressed in "the man of sin," as of Antichrist sitting in the temple of God ; of his reigning in Jerusalem ; of the abomination in the Holy Place ; of the signs from Heaven which will be with him.

But, it may be asked, what can be the nature of the fulfilment of this mysterious battle, this gathering of armies on both sides, this call to the fowls, the array, the horsemen, and the slaughter ?

It may be observed throughout the Apocalypse as its peculiar characteristic, that St. John always combines and intermingles his allegories and emblems ; this is the case from the most extensive figures, the subject of which is often put forth afterwards by another vision, down to incidental similitudes and short metaphors. As, for instance, the locusts are no locusts, for they distinguish between good and evil ; the horses are no horses, for they have lion heads breathing fire and brimstone : Babylon is

no Babylon, because it stands on seven hills; the great city is no city, because it is in the wilderness: the Warrior is no warrior, for His sword is not on His thigh, as the Psalmist describes,² but proceeding from His mouth. The object of this rule is, no doubt, in order to prevent our connecting the thing signified with sensible images; and that by the various figures correcting and qualifying each other, we may have a right notion of what is intended. After all contradictory statements have been reconciled, and have served to cut off erroneous conceptions, the remainder will leave the great truths before us.

What, therefore, is the idea we gain from this battle? It is, first, the entire overthrow of the wicked: their flesh devoured, from the greatest even to the least, indicates utter extinction. Many passages in the Prophets with which the figures are connected sustain this language. But by what means is this effect produced? their adversaries are unarmed—"in linen white and clean," except their Captain, Who has no offensive weapons but "the Breath of His mouth." And the idea of an army is altogether destroyed by the same being also a Marriage Supper and a Bride. We have, therefore, no clue to the nature of the fulfilment, except that of final discomfiture, all notion of a sensible warfare being stopped. It may be mentioned that the Great Warrior of Israel, described in such glowing language in the hour of triumphant victory³ by the Prophet, was in reality as opposite to the figures used and the primary idea conveyed, as it is possible for thought to conceive. It was "a Lamb brought to the slaughter." The title of the victorious King was a sentence of condemnation on the Cross. This battle may be something of the same kind.

² Ps. xlv. 4.

³ Isa. lxiii. 1-4.

Another idea conveyed is that of satisfaction to all who shall witness it—it is *the supper of the Great God*; for this is the great summons to universal nature to partake in it, the call to the fowls to be feasted, to be gratified, to be filled and satisfied by that consummation of God's awful justice. For this had been the yearning of the creature, the groaning and travailing together in pain, waiting to be satisfied with the righteousness of God. This is implied in Ezekiel: "Gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty. Ye shall eat till ye be full. Thus ye shall be filled at My table."⁴ The same is implied throughout the Apocalypse, that the saints are always calling for and acknowledging the vengeance with thanksgiving. This is a great mystery.

There is another impression, I think, we have remaining after removing every conception which an opposing or contradictory image destroys, that of great manifestation. It is indicated by the "*Angel standing in the sun*," as visible as the sun itself, and his "*voice*" heard by "*every fowl that flies in Heaven*," and the great "*gathering*," so to speak, of witnesses. The same is expressed in many other ways whenever this, "the day of the Lord's vengeance," is described: the call is made, "Come near, ye nations, to hear; let the earth hear, and all that is therein. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies."⁵ This corresponds with the call to the fowls. "Speak unto every feathered fowl. Assemble yourselves, and come." It is added; "And all the heathen shall see My judgment." And thus before; "I will sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations."⁶ But more forcible than all at the

⁴ Ezek. xxxix. 17-20. ⁵ Isa. xxxiv. 1-3. ⁶ Ezek. xxxviii. 23.

close of the Prophet Isaiah ; from "the new heavens and the new earth" the Saints "shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against Me." Which going forth St. Augustin explains as not bodily going out, but the knowledge which they shall have when in the joy of their Lord.⁷ The same is implied by the solemn burying for "seven months," in Ezekiel, "in the day that God is glorified."⁸ This idea of manifestation is further intimated by the presence and the co-operation of the army of the Saints ; by their treading the wine-press of wrath ; by their sitting in judgment afterwards ; by the punishment being in the presence of the Lamb and of His Angels. And hence is that command to him who would be of the army of Christ to keep his garments, lest they "see his shame."⁹ It may further be observed, that in the Prophet Daniel this account of the Beast being "slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame," is connected with, and immediately preceded by, the mention of the assembled universe, "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him ; the judgment was set, and the books were opened."¹ The mysterious connection between the two passages is awful and striking. It looks as if the "*invitation to the fowls*" was the presence of the Angels for the manifestation of the Great Day.

⁷ See Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 22.

⁸ Ezek. xxxix. 13.

⁹ Rev. xvi. 15. See p. 296.

¹ Dan. vii. 10, 11.

SECTION V

SATAN BOUND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS

CHAP. XX. “¹ And I saw an angel coming down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years; ³ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Since St. John had eaten of the Little Book his revelations have not been of successive periods of time in the Church's history, but prophetic visions of the Church; setting forth in each some new phase or deeper mystery; containing, for the most part, explanatory incidents of the foregoing vision, yet interweaving indications which connect the two, and intimate that they are but other features of the same subject, and traversing over the same stage of time. This is the mode of the Apocalypse, scattering threads of connection which we are to put together, and so to know in what period of the Church we are, by comparing it with the other descriptions. “In this book of the Apocalypse,” says St. Augustin, “there are many obscure expressions to exercise the reader's mind, and a few from the manifestation of which the rest may with pains be traced; especially because he so repeats the same things in many ways as that he appears to be speaking of different circumstances, when, in fact, it may be ascertained by investigation that he is but repeating the very same things in different ways.”¹ To which may be added that saying of Victorinus,² that he is ever recapitulating from the beginning.

¹ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 17.

² See p. 287.

There is throughout the Apocalypse a constant resuming and expanding of things before indistinctly alluded to; every vision grows out of something before stated; so that all the passages, if we may reverently use a familiar expression, dovetail one with another. Thus as he had mentioned Antichrist and had mentioned Babylon, each of them as it were incidentally, and then returns to give at length their history; so having before said that the "unclean spirits," which prepare the nations for this great encounter, had gone forth from "the mouth of *the dragon*," as well as from that of the Beast and false prophet, he returns to give an account of the former of the three. And, in order to connect it with what had gone before, he studiously mentions him in the very terms he had before used when he described his being cast out of heaven (chap. xii. 9) as "*the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan.*" It seems as if St. John's method was like that of answering questions such as might reasonably have arisen in the reader's mind as he proceeds.

It is thus mentioned by Cornelius à Lapide as a canon of prophetic interpretation: "In the Apocalypse the prophetic visions being revealed to St. John, as it appears, at different times, are described not in the order of the events, for the series and course of the visions is oftentimes interrupted and the time broken, so that things which have happened, or rather are to happen previously, are postponed, and things that occur later are first mentioned. There are, therefore, in this book anticipations, recapitulations, omissions, and, again, retrogressions and repetitions of the same events, and, moreover, sudden transitions. For the Prophet passes from one thing into another—from similarity or from contrast, from the sign to the thing signified; and when things have not been perfectly declared, returns

to former matters by a violent retrogression." This acknowledges the fact, but inadequately represents the very wonderful intertexture of this Divine Book; the broader expansion and gradual introduction of the mysteries which lie under the course of events, the secrets as it were of Heaven and of hell, with which they are connected. From the external circumstances he continually withdraws the reader, to afford him a further and deeper insight into the hidden things of God; and all this by strong living images. "I have said but little," says St. Jerome speaking of the Apocalypse, "of the merit of this book, for which all praise falls short; even in single expressions there lie hid manifold understandings."³ Thus in the present instance. Now that Antichrist has been described as half concealed under the Church's history until his final destruction by the Lord's coming "by the spirit of His mouth"⁴—by the sword going forth from His mouth (chap. xix.), he returns to express the whole period in connection with the author of all evil, Satan himself.

The Angel with "*the great chain in his hand*" is another of those striking expressive pictures in the Apocalypse, which of itself speaks to the sight all that the further description contains. It is here said that "*Satan*" is "*bound*," and we must, as usual, refer to the scriptural key, and inquire to what the expression refers. Our Lord speaks of the strong man being overcome by one stronger than he, who taketh from him his armour and divideth the spoils.⁵ It is there spoken with reference to evil spirits possessing the bodies of men till cast out by Christ. This has ceased in the Christian world, so likewise have the heathen idolatries, sacrifices, oracles, and

³ "Multiplices latent intelligentiæ." Ad Paulin. Ep. 103. tom. iii.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 8.

⁵ Luke xi. 22.

the like; which is here expressed by his "*deceiving the nations no more.*" In these things he certainly now is bound where the Christian Church extends. These are sensible indications of a power restrained. And surely it is contained in the promise to the Christian Church, that it shall tread on serpents, and scorpions, and "all the power of the enemy." "We are confidently certain," says Origen to Celsus, "from our own experience, that they who in Christianity worship God through Jesus, living according to His Gospel, and persevering in appointed prayers night and day, are unassailable by magic arts or by devils."⁶ It was then matter of experience. But the restraint is from "*deceiving the nations,*" that is expressly from Gentile idolatry. Hence, probably, that heathen report mentioned by St. Augustin as either "an oracle of devils or a figment of men,"⁷ that the Christian religion should only last three hundred and sixty-five years. As if the "*thousand years*" were suspected to be "the acceptable year of the Lord," and thus by evil spirits falsified.

The Christian period is sometimes expressed by the Day—the day of salvation, the day of grace, the day of the Lord, and a thousand years are with the Lord as one day; they both express full definite periods of time; it may be, the great Sabbath of the Christian kingdom. During this period Satan is bound, or his power restrained: the same has before been expressed by his having been cast out of Heaven, *i.e.* from the kingdom of Heaven on earth (chap. xii. 9, 13). And, again, of his having given up his throne to the Beast, who in some other manner is to deceive and seduce, without that worship of devils by idolatry which is Satan's throne, so that

⁶ Lib. vi. p. 302. ⁷ Civ. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 54.

all mankind will wonder at such a revival of his power (chap. xiii. 2, 3). But Scripture intimates that before the end of the world it will be otherwise; there shall be "signs and lying wonders,"⁸ "signs from Heaven," and the like. And more than all, there will be the desolating "abomination" exceeding all other idolatries—the Man of Sin, "as God, sitting in the temple of God," in which the old serpent will again have his power unloosed as much as it was in all heathen worship; nay, surely, far more. In the meanwhile there is a power "that letteth," *i.e.* that keeps under and restrains, as with a chain, the breaking out of the "Wicked one," who comes with all the working of Satan. "He may be called," says Origen, "the son of Satan. It will be by the co-operation of his very father, the devil, in producing signs, and prodigies, and lying powers. For that co-operation of the devil himself to seduce mankind, will leave far behind those magical arts which are now wrought to deceive men by the working of devils."⁹ This must, then, without doubt, be at the great season of Antichrist. Satan will then be loosed for "*a little season*," "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."¹ In like manner, it is intimated that the power of Antichrist is to be dominant in some peculiar manner; he is to slay the Witnesses—to prevail against the Saints. This corresponds with Satan at the end being "loosed." The history of the two is designedly interwoven together in the following account. They mutually blend with and bear on each other, as combined in the great final battle.

As the whole of this passage has been discussed at large by St. Augustin, the Church has followed his explanation.²

⁸ 2 Thess. ii. 9.

⁹ Con. Cel. lib. vi.

¹ Rev. xii. 12.

² Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 7, 8.

That the binding of Satan is from our Lord's Incarnation, is the opinion of St. Augustin, Tichonius, Andreas, St. Gregory, Primasius, Bede, Cornelius à Lapide. As our Lord said, on approaching His Passion, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."³ Thus Tichonius: "Christ bound Satan for a thousand years at His first coming, as He Himself said; 'How can one enter into a strong man's house, except he first bind the strong man?'"⁴ In this period God hath prohibited the devil from deceiving the nations: from the time of the Lord's Passion he is not permitted to do what he pleases; for God suffers not His servants to be tried beyond what they are able to endure." "His being loosed for a short time is," he says, "in the time of Antichrist, when the man of sin will be revealed, and shall have received all power of persecuting such as he had not from the beginning. By the thousand years he puts a part for the whole." St. Gregory: that "the apostate Angel, by the ministry of those Angels among whom he was once pre-eminent, is bound and hidden for our good; but shall then for our probation, by the relaxing of those his chains, be let loose to exert his whole strength against us."⁵ And again, of the same: "By the number of a thousand years he hath designated not the quantity of time, but the whole period in which the Church reigns; that his being loosed from the abyss is his breaking forth from the hearts of the wicked, which now rage in secret, from which he will then burst forth in open persecution, having received power against the Church."⁶ And afterwards, that his being loosed for a short space is that time of which our Lord speaks; "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the be-

³ John xii. 31.⁴ Matt. xii. 29.⁵ Moral. lib. v. cap. ix.⁶ Moral. lib. xviii. cap. 42.

ginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." And of which He adds, that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."⁷ And Bede, likewise, ever following the same great master, St. Augustin, "that it is a recapitulation from the beginning, and the binding of Satan by the strong man, that he may spoil his goods. That his being cast into the abyss is from the hearts of believers, as the Lord showed visibly by sending them into the swine." Bede adds, with St. Augustin and Tichonius, that the short time is the three years and a half, when he will rage with all his power. "The binding of the devil," says St. Augustin, "is not permitting him to exercise his whole power of temptation. And the '*setting a seal upon him*,' as signifying that it will be a secret who belong to the devil's part and who do not, as altogether hidden in this life." But this expression of '*sealing*,' like that of the king of Babylon setting a seal on the lion's den of Daniel,⁸ and the chief priests on the tomb of Christ, must be considered as fast securing by the will and power of God. In like manner St. Augustin speaks of "*the abyss*" into which he is *sent* or *cast*, as the deep hearts of the wicked; and *sent* as from the faithful, from whose hearts he is shut out, and more entirely possesses the wicked." This interpretation would render it equivalent to his being "cast out into the earth" (chap. xii. 9); as from the kingdom of Heaven excluded, and possessing the earthly-minded. But for the understanding of the word we must refer to the Apocalypse itself: it is from the abyss partially unlocked that the smoke of the locust-plague arose; it was from the same more fully that the infidel Beast himself ascended (chap.

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 21, 22. Moral. lib. xxxii. cap. 15.

⁸ See Dan. vi. 17. "That the purpose might not be changed."

xvii. 8) to whom Satan gave his power. And now, by the permission of God, Satan himself is allowed to issue from the same. Thus, before being thus bound by Christ, he is represented as "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it;"⁹ and by the permission of God having power not only of temptation, as in that case of Job, but of signs and wonders.

Cornelius à Lapidè may express the opinion of the Latin Church, that "the thousand years are the whole time of the reign of Christ in this life, in the Church contending against Antichrist; for the thousand years is a perfect number, the solid square; for ten times ten make a hundred, and ten hundred the thousand. The thousand, therefore, is the square of ten; or else a thousand years," he adds, "may imply very many, the definite number put for the indefinite."

The thousand years St. Augustin takes either as the sixth age of the world, coinciding with the sixth day, to be followed by the Sabbath which hath no evening; or else merely put for the fulness of time, as the thousand is the solid square of ten put for universality.¹ Andreas has the same explanation; adding, "that we have the proof of his being bound in the disappearance of idolatry, the destruction of idol temples, and the knowledge of the will of God through the whole world." Aretas likewise; "That the exact period of time intended is of the secrets which the Lord hath put in His own power. But the loosing for a short time is of the period of Antichrist, when, as our Saviour says, the days will be shortened for the elect's sake."

God is pleased to give us His prophecies under such a veil of obscurity to suit His own purposes, and to remove

⁹ Job i. 7.

¹ Civ. Dei, lib. xx.

that veil as He considers it expedient for His Church. Thus as it was commanded and necessary that Christians should live in daily watchfulness and expectation of Christ's kingdom; it would have been inconsistent with this that they should have fully known the intervention of a period described as "*a thousand years*;" but this veil he gradually removes. For St. Augustin found it necessary to expound the space as taking in the past, so uncertain was the prospective view of the thousand years.

There is a difficulty in supposing the "*little season*" for which Satan is to be loosed to be the same as the three years and a half, the mystical expression for the reign of Antichrist; for the Saints that reign with Christ during the preceding period of the thousand years have many of them suffered under Antichrist. Therefore it cannot be that the reign of Antichrist begins at the end of the thousand years, although it is then most intensely revealed. Perhaps the three years and a half may be the mystical number expressive of a period of trial, of longer and shorter duration, the whole time of Antichrist being the three years and a half of Daniel;² but this, the shorter space of Daniel's half-week, "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," "for the overspreading of abominations until the consummation and pouring of wrath upon the desolation."³ The former period being the three years and a half of the two Witnesses; the latter period the three days and a half during which their bodies lie dead. For it is remarkable that the three days and a half, as well as three years and a half, occur as the mystical symbolic numbers both of Daniel and of St. John. This half-week of Daniel, St. Irenæus says, "is the three years and six months."⁴

² Dan. xii. 7. ³ Dan. ix. 27. ⁴ Adv. Hær. lib. v.

SECTION VI

THE PERSONAL ANTICHRIST; OR, "A LITTLE SEASON"

It may be asked why there is in the Apocalypse no distinct allusion to that personal Antichrist of which St. Paul is supposed to speak, St. John in his Epistle, and Daniel ; and whose duration for three years and a half is so often spoken of by ancient writers. It may be that such particular mention would not be consistent with the general character of this sacred Book and the nature of its prophecies. For St. John speaks not of persons, but throughout of great principles, their developments in the course of time, their operations in whole bodies of men, and the phases they assume in successive generations. The Apocalypse is an embodiment not so much of historic incidents as of divine philosophy ; descriptive of good and evil in their influences and progressive results. It appears doubtful whether St. John ever speaks in it of our Blessed Lord Himself as it were personally ; but only in His manifestations in and through His Church, by His Spirit, and in His members, or through the medium of His Angels in allegoric visions. Although His unseen Presence therein is ever, as it were, felt and recognized ; His birth, His sufferings and ministry, His resurrection and ascension, are seen as set forth in His Body, the Church ; and the three years and a half of His preaching is taken as supplying the symbolic period of the Bride in the wilderness and His two Witnesses. So much so as to have created a doubt, as in speaking of the "man child" born of the Woman, whether it might not be of His own personal history in the flesh. In like manner, it may be the case that the great body of Antichrist, which St. John

describes in the Apocalypse, may derive its symbolic character from the future history of its head and personal leader. And this may be bound up in the infidel Beast of St. John. Thus Origen describes "the Antichrist" as containing within himself all evil, culminating and concentrating in him, the very child of the devil, in like manner as all goodness in the Son of God. "As countenances of men," he says, "differ from each other, so do their hearts. And thus, in those inclined to good, they are not all equally moulded and fashioned towards it; so in the bad some are more entirely given up to evil, others less so. There is nothing strange, therefore, that there should be two extremes, the one of good in the man according to Jesus, from Whom there hath flowed to mankind such conversion, healing, and amelioration; the contrary extreme in him who is called Antichrist."¹

Distinct mention of "the Antichrist" does not occur in the Apocalypse, yet he is represented throughout under a variety of figures, according to the varied aspects of evil which he assumes. The Scriptures, which speak of Christ, speak of the Antichrist also. But the Apocalypse, as speaking of nations and changes of the world, necessarily introduces the same in its developed forms. The Beast, the multitudinous body of infidelity, as opposed to the Lamb on Mount Sion; Babylon as opposed to the new Jerusalem, *i.e.* the city of confusion to the peace of God; the Harlot as opposed to the Bride; the false prophet as opposed to the Prophet that was to come, or the faithful Witness. Each of these as different indications of that evil one, as they come in connection or contrast with the kingdom of Christ. The Apocalypse, being intended for the habitual warning of Christians at all times, speaks of

¹ Con. Cel. lib. vi. p. 306.

that great principle which is of universal concern, such as to reach to every individual heart. It may, therefore, be the case that such mention of a person would be inconsistent with the historic or prophetic character of this Divine Book, but that the individual unseen, that incarnation of evil which is to be, supplies the symbols, and is, in fact, contained in them.

But it appears from the Apocalypse itself, that before the termination of all things there is to be a great intensity of evil, in which there will come forth not only the false prophet in aid of the Beast, but Satan also himself will be let loose as he had never been before, and that "*for a little season.*" There is nothing therefore to hinder, but that this short space of a character so peculiar may be, as St. Augustin considers it, the three years and a half of that personal Antichrist. This opinion of the individual Antichrist of this limited period is perfectly compatible with all that has been said in the Apocalypse; and perhaps might seem almost implied in that gathering to a head of all wickedness for "*a little season*" at the end of all things. And in confirmation of this view, that there may be a Person at last of whom the Apocalypse says nothing, it may be observed that the Beast herein described cannot of himself alone be "the man of sin" of St. Paul, even were this "man of sin" to represent a multitude or a principle, as the characteristics are in some points different; the Beast has no semblance of good, which, as Origen notices, is the chief mark of the latter:² but if this Antichrist of St. Paul be of the two Beasts combined,³ *i.e.* of infidelity with hypocrisy, it might be as easy to suppose such combination to be found in a person as in a principle of evil. It leaves this matter untouched.

² Con. Cel. lib. vi.

³ See pp. 237, 239.

But there occurs this great difficulty, that the personal reign of Antichrist for three years and a half of which the Fathers speak seems to be founded on the words of Daniel and St. John. St. Augustin expressly speaks of it as such. He does not mention it as a tradition or an opinion, but as Scripture. In speaking of Satan being let loose "for a little season," he adds ; "for we read that for three years and a half he will rage with all his might." And again ; "This last persecution, which is to be by Antichrist, as we have already said, as it has been laid down before in this book," *i.e.* the Apocalypse, "and by Daniel the Prophet, will be for three years and six months."⁴ How, then, is this to be reconciled ; for we have considered the three years and a half of St. John to be a long and unknown period of time. The mode of interpretation which we have throughout applied will solve the difficulty. For whatever may be the case in Daniel and other parts of holy Scripture, in the Apocalypse numbers are a part of the Divine symbolism, notwithstanding any literal fulfillments they may have in the secret counsels of God ; they are in keeping with the whole of the sacred hieroglyphic or allegory as expressive of certain ideas ; and such their meaning is to be gathered from other places in Scripture. It may be that the three years and a half are taken and thus used symbolically, while in Daniel they are to be literally understood : or it may be that in Daniel likewise they are to be thus interpreted. The "time, times, and an half," are twice mentioned in the Prophet (chap. vii. 25 ; xii. 7), and, on the latter occasion especially, appear to be of a long and mysterious period. And not comprehended by Daniel himself, for he repeats the question, and says ; "I heard, but I understood not : " remind-

⁴ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. chap. 8 and 13.

ing us of our Lord's own words, "It is not for you to know the times;" those words which, as St. Augustin says, so emphatically bid us to be at rest, without attempting to calculate the times.⁵ Or, if the proverbial three years and a half are founded on anything in Daniel—it may be, as we have before suggested, the half-week of desolation; a day for a year, as is commonly the case. At all events, the method of interpretation which has been adopted is throughout perfectly consistent in itself, and explains and harmonizes all the difficulties, which are otherwise insuperable. Our Lord's ministry was for three years and a half; St. John has taken this as the symbolic figure to denote the period of the two Witnesses in His Church, and also of the Apostolic Woman in the wilderness. Again; Daniel has made known to us that the period of the personal Antichrist will be for three years and a half: St. John, in like manner, takes this also—referring us by his mode of expression, "for a time, and times, and half a time,"⁶ to Daniel—as the symbolic figure to represent his body, the Beast, and also as the period of the Holy City being trodden under foot.

By this mode of interpretation, which it is conceived the Apocalypse requires throughout, the Primitive and Catholic opinion of a personal Antichrist to reign for three years and a half is left untouched; it is not entered upon or denied, inasmuch as those who maintain this opinion do incidentally allude also to this great multitudinous body, known as Antichrist, of which the Apocalypse speaks. But whether there is to exist such a personal Antichrist or not, continues as it has been left by Holy Scripture itself and understood by the early Church.

The Patristic opinion of Antichrist has been laid down

⁵ See Civ. Dei, xviii. 53. ⁶ Chap. xii. 14. See p. 180.

by some persons to be this : that this mysterious principle of evil, working in great multitudes of men, will at last be developed in a head or leader ; that of this there are continually occurring minor fulfilments, as shadows or types going before, of evil gathering and affecting whole nations, and then appearing concentrated in a person. And certainly it is the case, that if the scattered sayings of ancient writers were formed into a definite system, that something of this kind might be the result. But it would be more correct to say that from time to time they speak of each of these under the name of Antichrist ; sometimes of a principle operating in many ; sometimes of a person ; sometimes of prevailing wickedness, heresy, or corruption ; sometimes of an apostate, or a tyrant, or an hypocrite, as forerunners of "the man of sin." And thus they speak, because such is Holy Scripture ; they do not profess to have any knowledge or system on the subject, but, continually expressing their ignorance on this matter, merely comment on the passages of Scripture which are in their thoughts.

It may be said that the early Fathers take these things literally—the man of sin—the three years and a half—the local Jerusalem—the two Witnesses, and the like ; and their value as interpreters is so great for this very reason, that where the fulfilment is as yet uncertain they adhere closely to Scripture. And, therefore, whatever interpretations may be elicited from Scripture itself, on comparing things spiritual with spiritual, or by the course of events is rendered probable, the Fathers bear in themselves a breadth and depth of application in like manner as Scripture itself does, and may be explained in the same way. Our object, therefore, must be to show that our Apocalyptic interpretation does not contravene the rest of the Scriptures.

St. John says in his Epistle, "*the* Antichrist shall come," ὁ Ἀντίχριστος (chap. ii. 18), of whom "ye have heard," and of whom "even now there are many" forerunners. This, then, must be he who will reign at last, when Satan will be loosed, as St. Augustin understands it. But St. John also speaks of something far more extensive; "There is a spirit of the Antichrist," τὸ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου (chap. iv. 3), "whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." He speaks of it afterwards as ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, "that which is in the world." He describes it as so comprehensive as to embrace every thing "which does not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh." It is this of which he warns them. Now this the great spirit, or body, or principle of Antichrist, from the time at which he spake even to the end, is that which he describes in the Apocalypse; to escape "the mark" of which is to belong to Christ. It is this very antagonism which he describes in his Epistle between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist. It so corresponds that the Epistle states exactly in plain terms what the Apocalypse does by figurative expressions. In the latter, "All that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the book of the Lamb, shall worship the Beast."⁷ In the Epistle, "Every spirit which confesseth not Christ come in the flesh is the spirit of Antichrist." They are entirely co-extensive. Altogether one and the same spirit. In every respect co-existent in time and place. In St. John's Epistle every one belongs to Christ or to Antichrist; and so it is in the Apocalypse. And both descriptions imply that they are running into a head in something yet future—which is to be revealed.

St. Paul's account is the same: he speaks of one whose

⁷ Rev. xiii. 8; 1 John iv. 3.

coming they had heard of—"the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself," who shall at last be "revealed." St. John in his Epistle marks the person and the principle to be the same by using the same name Antichrist of both; St. Paul, too, identifies the person he speaks of with the multitudinous body of the Apocalypse by the term, "the son of perdition," for the Beast in St. John is he "who goeth into perdition;" both referring to the same definite mark in Daniel.

But St. Paul proceeds to speak, in like manner with St. John in his Epistle, of something more extensive; "for the mystery of wickedness already worketh," until "the wicked one be revealed." It is quite parallel with St. John. For St. John says, "*the* Antichrist cometh," "the spirit of Antichrist already is come;" St. Paul, "the wicked one cometh," "the mystery of wickedness already worketh." ὁ Ἀντιχρίστος and τὸ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου, in St. John; ὁ ἄνομος and τὸ τῆς ἀνομίας, in St. Paul. But this "mystery of iniquity" worketh until that final revelation of the wicked one, which St. Paul describes to be with all that working of Satan with lying wonders, which the Apocalypse describes as Satan for "*a short time unloosed.*"

In the meanwhile, it is impossible not to connect the Babylon—the woman sitting on the Beast—with the power that letteth; for it is on her being overthrown that the wicked one is revealed. St. Augustin himself speaks of "the mystery that worketh" as good and bad mingled together in the Church, "until that which is now hidden in the Church, *i.e.* the mystery of iniquity, goeth forth from it." "All shall then go forth from her who shall belong to that last Antichrist, and then shall he be revealed."⁸ It is in this state that we have considered the Church to be

⁸ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 19; and see p. 354 and p. 339.

Babylon, or confusion. What could more exactly represent it? Thus on the expression, "*he set a seal upon him,*" *i.e.* on Satan, St. Augustin says; "This appears to me to signify that he wished it to remain hidden and unknown what persons appertained to the part of the devil, and who did not. For this remained hidden during that time," *i.e.* of the thousand years.⁹ Surely this is the Babylon—the confusion, *i.e.* the confounding together of the Church. The duration, too, and the judgment of Babylon occurs during the thousand years that Satan is bound, which indicates that it must be the state of Christendom before "the man of sin" is revealed. As St. Peter says, "judgment must begin at the house of God;" and then, in awful allusion to the perdition of Antichrist, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel?"¹ This passage St. Jerome applies to that last destruction, which is of Gog and Magog.² Even among the Seven Churches there is frequent mention of Satan,³ although bound.

It is evident both from St. John's Epistle and from St. Paul, that the Antichrist which was to come had been the subject of their previous teaching, as the final consummation to which all things were tending. It is, also, evident throughout the Apocalypse, that all things therein are tending to some great revelation of wickedness at the end. The only point wanting in the latter is the distinct mention of a person then to be revealed.

The great objection to an individual Antichrist is, that we are unwilling to limit and confine to a single person and a short period evil of such magnitude: but this difficulty is altogether obviated by the Apocalypse, which

⁹ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. chap. 7.

¹ 1 Peter iv. 17.

² Lib. xi. In Ezek. cap. xxxviii.

³ See p. 56.

describes it as in extent so vast and universal, and so intimately connected throughout with the history of the Church, and of every individual in it; thereby coinciding altogether with the Epistles of St. John and St. Paul, the former of which speaks not only of the Antichrist which is to come, but also of the principle of Antichrist then in the world, embracing everything which is not of Christ: and the latter, not only of the wicked one to be revealed, but also of the mystery of the wicked one working until that time. But here it must by the way be observed, that if in this case we abide by the literal construction, that as it is expressed by the masculine pronoun in the Greek, it must speak of a person; and as it is expressed by the neuter, it speaks of a principle also: by parity of interpretation "he that letteth" and "that which letteth" must indicate both a person and a principle. "He that letteth," the good Spirit of God, an opinion mentioned by St. Chrysostom; "that which letteth," His Church, as still contending with the unfaithfulness of an adulterous generation.

This objection, therefore, to a personal Antichrist being removed by the Apocalypse, the reasons for it are as follows. Scripture itself does appear to indicate it; the Patristic and Catholic Church confirms this understanding of the Scriptures. It is rendered probable by what we know of the wonderful, as it were magical, power of personal influence; the universal tendency to what is vulgarly called hero-worship. To this may be now added the growing contempt of "powers as ordained of God," and consequent exaltation of individual power and prowess. Moreover the course of events seems tending towards it, by the "running to and fro" and rapid movement unknown to former ages, circulation of intelligence such as

would hitherto have appeared miraculous, and the consequent amalgamation of the whole world, as brought to respond with electric celerity to corresponding influences. In the meanwhile, in the Apocalypse is set before us the working of that one vast body of evil now in secret, but hereafter to be revealed "*for a little season.*"

But, it may be asked, Are there no indications in the Apocalypse, however indistinct, of this individual Antichrist? It is mentioned that at the end "*for a little season*" Satan is to be unloosed: now St. John had incidentally mentioned before, in speaking of the seven Kings, that "one is not yet come, and when he cometh he must continue *a short space,*" i.e. "*a little season.*"⁴ He speaks in that passage of one that is to come, in like manner as in his Epistle he says, "the Antichrist shall come."

It has been before observed⁵ that the Beast of the Apocalypse, although marked as the body of Antichrist, yet wants some of the characteristics of the personal Antichrist, so much so, that the individual Antichrist might be a combination of the two Beasts. But now it appears that we have something in the Apocalypse that does combine the two, which so entirely coincides with the character of the first Beast that he is called "the image of the Beast;" and he is brought about or made by the second Beast—has life, and speech, and his worship effected by the second Beast. Here, therefore, we have that for which we had been seeking in both characteristics, something whose coming will be after the working of Satan. And as our Lord Himself speaks of Antichrist as "the abomination," i.e. the idol-image, *βδέλυγμα*, St. John may perhaps use the term "image" with reference to our Lord's own word.

⁴ Rev. xvii. 10.

⁵ See p. 404, and p. 237.

Other reasons might be mentioned: we have supposed this "image" to imply some opposition to the second commandment,⁶ and therefore to our Lord Himself, the Incarnate Son, the object of worship to the faithful, "the Image of the invisible God;" so the personal Antichrist is the visible incarnate image of infidelity, *i.e.* of the seven-headed Beast. The false prophet puts life into this image of the Beast. Antichrist shall be "mighty," says Daniel, "but not by his own power."⁷ He is described by St. Jerome, as almost an incarnation of Satan.⁸ By Origen, as the son of the devil. The false Prophet causes all to worship this image. "The abomination" shall sit in the house of God, and be worshipped as God.

In short, the Beast of the Apocalypse is what our Lord speaks of as "the wickedness being multiplied," τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν; St. Paul, as "the mystery of the wickedness working," τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας ἐνεργεῖται; St. John, as "the spirit of the Antichrist which is in the world," τὸ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου ὃ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. But in all these there is something to come. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation," says our Lord, "stand in the holy place," then flee to the mountains—flee from the falling Jerusalem. St. Paul of the same; "then shall that wicked one, ὁ ἄνομος, be revealed." St. John, in his Epistle, "*the Antichrist*," ὁ Ἀντίχριστος, cometh." In the Apocalypse, the kings of the earth shall give their power to the Beast "*for one hour*."⁹ There is one that cometh that must continue "*for a short space*." For "*a little season*" Satan shall be unloosed. If the Beast be a principle of infidelity in great bodies of men, the personal Antichrist himself will be an "image" or embodiment

⁶ See pp. 245, 246.

⁷ Dan. viii. 24.

⁸ In Dan. vii.

⁹ See p. 337.

of that principle; as we find the forerunners of Antichrist are such as represent the spirit of the age in which they live. And thus this Beast is one with the individual Antichrist, having altogether the same characteristics. There is something mysterious in the mention of his "name" in so marked and peculiar a manner in the Apocalypse, and attention therein being called to his "*name*;" for our Lord Himself is supposed to say of him, "If another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive." Twice He is understood to be speaking of him—once as an idol-image of worship, and once under this obscure designation of one "in his own name."¹

There is therefore one to come, although short in duration, yet of importance so vast as to have been the one object that filled the vision of Prophets and Apostles in all the intervening space between their times and the Judgment; of such magnitude as to cast into the shade all wickedness and power which have before existed in the world; an incarnation of evil, in one diabolical and yet human, with the powers of hell let loose "*for a short season*;" but although then at last to be revealed, whose influence by the secret operation of Satan extends through the whole course of the Christian Church. But in the Apocalypse St. John, like his Divine Master in the written Gospels, describes rather the working of this wickedness than the person of the wicked one; and this he does throughout, from the time when the dragon, overcome by "the man-child" and "wroth with the woman, went his way."²

¹ Matt. xxiv. 15; John v. 43.

² Rev. xii. 17.

SECTION VII

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

CHAP. XX. “⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; and of such as had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

For consolation under this great tribulation, and in contrast to the corruptions and desolation of the Church visible, is now described the glory and blessedness of those that are in Christ, who, as St. John says in his Epistle. “have overcome the wicked one,” and are here spoken of as have “*not worshipped the Beast.*” It may be noticed how admirably one vision falls in with another, lies under and is joined to it, and comes out to view as the other recedes, like a fresh picture further explanatory of the foregoing. Thus we had the binding of Satan for a thousand years—and we know that at our Lord’s ascension “He led captivity captive,” and, also, at the same time, “gave gifts unto men.”¹ The power and the kingdom then given was to be in Him and for those that reign with Him. Numerous scattered expressions, which from time to time have occurred throughout the Apocalypse, expand by degrees and gather into the fulness of this vision; and the many descriptions of the elect which are

¹ Eph. iv. 8.

in Christ, introduced by degrees more or less distinctly as being in His kingdom, are here more fully discerned;—the Church invisible, the Lamb's Book of Life. For these who "*reign with Christ a thousand years*" are evidently those who have been introduced from time to time, and mentioned as priests and kings reigning with Christ; they who throughout the Christian period are in "the kingdom of Heaven" in its progress on earth. Thus St. John of himself, as already one of these, "He hath made us kings and priests unto God" (chap. i. 6). And thus at the opening of the Seals it is said; "Thou hast made us kings and priests:" where it is added, as if explanatory, "and we shall reign on the earth" (chap. v. 10). Thus we had the "man-child" who was "to rule the nations" "caught up unto God and His throne" (chap. xii. 5), but the expression and the mystery was left; here we have those early martyrs described as sitting on thrones;—"the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." But, in proof that this was not of the primitive martyrs only, that promise is given to every one in the Seven Churches unto the end; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (chap. iii. 21). The four and twenty Elders, too, were sitting upon thrones, and had crowns upon their heads. And the four living creatures, representing those who are in Christ, were "within the throne" of God "and about the throne" (chap. iv. 6). But there, in the perfection of the type, the predestined number of the Church of the elect written in the Book of Life, the thrones seen in Heaven are twenty-four;² here the thrones are indefinite and innumerable. Again; varied and manifold are the types, lest we dwell

² Rev. iv. 4.

on the sign more than the thing signified : these that sit on thrones are also seen on white horses, and said to be "armies in Heaven"—in Heaven, yet on earth, contending with the armies of Antichrist ; there as warriors following the Captain of their salvation, as contending for the faith ; here sitting on thrones, as receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved ; reigning together with Him Who has the "many crowns," the "King of kings." They are "*priests of God*," as offering spiritual sacrifices. They are the "harpers" by the glassy sea of Heaven, as having the joy of the Holy Ghost. They are those who "follow the Lamb," and are by Him led to living fountains of water, as "the meek-spirited refreshed with the multitude of peace." But all alike are in Heaven—in the kingdom of Heaven, from which Satan hath been cast out and bound for a thousand years.

Further ; some mysterious power is ascribed to them—they sat on thrones and "*judgment was given unto them*:" thus of the man-child caught up to the throne of God it was said, that he is to "rule all nations with a rod of iron ;" and stated in promise to the Church of Thyatira, "he that overcometh, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ;"³ partaking thereby of the privileges of the Son of God, the King set upon Sion to subdue the heathen "with a rod of iron."⁴ In like manner the Witnesses ascended up to Heaven, and were there beheld by their enemies, who were judged, and repented at the sight.⁵ The warriors in Heaven are "more than conquerors" on earth, through Him Whom they follow whithersoever He goeth.

"*This is the first resurrection.*" It is "the regenera-

³ See pp. 35, 36, 37.

⁴ Ps. ii. 6, 9.

⁵ See p. 197.

tion"—that regeneration in which Christ promised that His Apostles should "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel,"⁶ in the fulness of the Church of God gathered from those scattered abroad in the world; or, as Aretas explains it, condemning by their faith the unbelieving Israel. "I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me—that ye may sit on thrones."⁷ "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."⁸ He "raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."⁹ It is even now fulfilled, as St. Paul says to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."¹ Such expressions are here all brought into the scene of this living energetic vision, which sets the reality of the doctrine before our eyes. "*I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them.*" The conflict, again, of Antichrist and the sitting on thrones is all interwoven with the account of the same in Daniel: "The horn made war with the Saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and *judgment was given* to the Saints of the Most High, and the time came that the Saints possessed the kingdom."² It is the fulfilment of all the glorious descriptions of the Prophets: the Israel of God in Christ their King, whom nations shall serve;³ the true children of Abraham possessing the gate of their enemies; the "better country," *i.e.* a "heavenly," which prophets and kings desired to see, and saw not. It fills all the prophetic Scriptures with glowing life to the Christian; as words that come forth

⁶ Matt. xix. 23.

⁷ Luke xxii. 29.

⁸ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁹ Eph. ii. 6.

¹ Heb. xii. 23.

² Dan. vii. 21, 22.

³ Gen. xxvii. 29; xx. 17.

from the dead and live for evermore, shining brightly in the night of Antichrist with the living fire of the Holy Ghost.

This resurrection is not that of the body, but that of the soul. It is expressly, "*I saw the souls.*" They are the souls first of the primitive martyrs, and then of all who have overcome the spirit of Antichrist. The expression is remarkable, "*of them that had been beheaded,*" or rather, literally, *slain by the axe*, expressing the short and comparatively easy death of the early persecutions, compared with something different in the fiery trials of the last days; or it may be in distinction from those who died in spiritual death by their intercourse with "the son of perdition;" or rather, to avoid the name of death at all, for it is of those who, according to Christ's promise, never see death. He says afterwards, "I saw the dead;" but here it is not the dead, but "*the souls*" of the living—of those who are not dead, and cannot die, although *smitten by the axe*. Scripture avoids in a remarkable manner applying the word death to the departure of the good: "Lazarus sleepeth;" "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth;" they "that sleep in Jesus," or that "depart hence in the Lord." It is "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." And it may be observed that St. John avoids saying "lived again," it is lived with Christ. He says not of them *ἀνέζησαν*, but *ἐζήσαν*. "He that believeth in Me shall never die." Here on earth their "life is hid with Christ in God;" and though *smitten with the axe*, yet, safe in that better life, they die not.

"*And of such as had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image*"—the souls of those that are unharmed by the Beast "*in head and hand,*" the manifold influences of in-

fidelity ; who have not worshipped the Beast, *i.e.* thought more of this world than of God ; nor his image, *i.e.* some fancied idol of its greatness set up in their own heart by spiritual self-deceits ; nor appeared openly in its favour and service with his mark on their brow ; nor directed their actions to it as an end, with his mark on the hand. St. Augustin considers that the Beast may be the infidel people ; and his image may represent simulation in those men who profess as it were the faith but live in unbelief.⁴ The question is a very difficult one, to be learned, if anywhere in Scripture itself, perhaps in St. John's Epistle or Gospel. It doubtless must comprehend everything against Christ. The expression of the "*the image of the Beast*" occurs as many as eight times in the Apocalypse, and there must be something important contained in the word ; perhaps one of the keys of the Apocalypse. God said, "Let us make man in our own image,"⁵ which was fulfilled in Christ ; and hence He has predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of His Son,"⁶ that "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we should also bear the image of the heavenly."⁷ Whence man, "renewed after the image of Him that created him,"⁸ is "the image and glory of God."⁹ But "the Dragon having seven heads and ten horns"¹ hath filled the earth with a Beast like himself with "seven heads and ten horns," to whom he hath given his power and throne.² And not only this, but will raise an image also of the same Beast ; an image of himself ; a man "created after the image and glory of God," to be the image of Satan with "eyes like a man," but

⁴ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 9.

⁵ Gen. i. 26.

⁶ Rom. viii. 29.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 49.

⁸ Col. iii. 10.

⁹ 1 Cor. xi. 7.

¹ Rev. xii. 3.

² Rev. xiii. 1, 2.

“showing himself that he is God.” So that men shall worship, it is said, both Satan, and the Beast, and the image.³ After the fall, “Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.”⁴ This is by Satan enhanced and perfected, a man without God. Hence he is supposed to be idolized by men. Having wealth and honour, says Augustin, by prospering in evil, the great sign of God’s wrath; and hence “considered so blessed by men as to be esteemed a god.”

“*This is the first resurrection:*” the custom of Scriptrue to speak of the death of the body as no death at all is remarkably shown here, not in single expressions only, but in the whole of this vision of those that reign with Christ, and “have overcome the wicked one;” for they are evidently those who are now in the body, as well as those who have departed. They are all one—there is no distinction, no line between. For this “*first resurrection*” and “*sitting on thrones*” is interpreted of both the quick and the dead. “Both they,” says Tichonius, “who are yet alive in this world, and they also who have departed this life, reign with Christ.” “The Church,” says Bede, “reigns with Christ in the living and in the dead. As the Apostle says, ‘Christ both died and rose, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.’”⁶ And St. Augustin; “After stating that the devil is bound for a thousand years, he mentions, as by recapitulation, what is done in or by the Church during that period. ‘*I saw thrones*’—not speaking of the ultimate judgment, but of those who now rule in the Church.” “The souls of the martyrs reign with Christ not yet reunited to their bodies. For the souls of the good are not by death separated from

³ Rev. xiii. 4, 15.

⁴ Gen. v. 3.

⁵ En. in Ps. ix. 22.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 9.

the Church, which is the kingdom of God. The Church, therefore, now reigns with Christ in the quick and the dead."

"The first resurrection here spoken of is," says St. Ambrose, "of those who have risen again by the Passion of Christ, have received His grace, and heard His voice; for 'they that hear shall live.'"⁷ St. Augustin, also, at length, that "there are two regenerations: the first, that which is now by faith through Baptism; the second, that of the flesh at the last judgment. So," he adds, "are there two resurrections: one, which is the first, is now, the resurrection '*of souls*,' which permits not to come into the second death; the other is the second resurrection, which is not as yet, but is to be in the end of the world—not '*of souls*,' but of bodies, which through the last judgment will send some into the second death, others into that life which hath no death."⁸ "As the first death," says Tichonius, "in this life is through sin, so the first resurrection is in this life through remission of sins. '*Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection*,' i.e. who hath kept that which by new birth in baptism he hath received." "It is evident, and ought not to be doubted, that it is of the perpetual kingdom, where even in this present life the saints reign. For they are said to reign who by the aid of God amidst the pressures of the world rule themselves and others," Bede, likewise, "This first resurrection is through baptism, through that mystical anointing by which we are all made priests and kings to God, as being members of the One Priest, and, as St. Peter says, a royal priesthood." It may be observed, that being made priests and kings is always of this present life.

"*The rest of the dead*," who partake not of this first

⁷ In Ps. i. 54.

⁸ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 6.

resurrection, may be understood of the Saints of the Old Testament, such as are mentioned under the fifth Seal, and distinguished from these who have died "for the witness of Jesus," inasmuch as they died for "the word of God," but not for the testimony of Jesus, who are told that they are to "rest for a little season, till their brethren should be fulfilled" (chap. vi. 11). As St. Paul says, speaking of the Saints of old, "These all . . . received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."⁹ "*Blessed and holy*," or sanctified, is he "*that hath part in this the first resurrection*," i.e. in this the regeneration which is in Christ, compared with those of old. Thus in the same sense before, "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (chap. xix. 9). And as our Lord Himself says, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them."¹ They saw "them afar off."² They saw afar off the day of Christ, and were glad.³ They saw, but entered not into the promised inheritance. And hence it was that although John the Baptist be the greatest of those born of women, "yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he," as having part in this "*the first resurrection*." The passage carries out and explains the fifth Seal after the manner of the Apocalypse; for the expression, "*the rest of the dead lived not again*," ἀνέζησαν, indicates their arising again unto life at the last Day, as spoken of the good of old, not of the wicked, who shall not see life. But it must be allowed that "*the rest of the dead*" here spoken of is interpreted by St. Ambrose, St.

⁹ Heb. xi. 39, 40.

¹ Luke x. 23, 24.

² Heb. xi. 13.

³ John viii. 56.

Augustin, and others, not of the Saints of the Old Testament, but of the reprobate.

“*On such the second death has no power:*” this connects it with the first vision of Christ, with Him Who “was dead and is alive,” Who says, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of *the second death.*”⁴

SECTION VIII

THE LOOSING OF SATAN

CHAP. XX. “⁷And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea. ⁹And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the Saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where likewise the Beast and false Prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

By comparing the passages together it may be clearly seen that the last conflict of the armies of Antichrist, in the previous chapter,¹ is the same as this “*loosing of Satan to seduce the nations.*” It seems like one and the same event differently expressed; as in the dreams of Pharaoh, the visions of Daniel, and in our Lord’s parables, where the same thing is brought forward under different forms and aspects, as it comes forth under new relations and is connected with other principles. For in the last chapter reference is evidently made to the invitation of the fowls in Ezekiel to “the supper of the great God,” which is the gathering together of the army of Gog and Magog. Atten-

⁴ Rev. ii. 11.

¹ See pp. 387, 391.

tion to those two mysterious chapters of Ezekiel (xxxviii. and xxxix.) will show that it is this warfare which is there described, and that both in this chapter and the former it is the great and last conflict of Antichrist. This expression of "*the four quarters of the earth*" indicates that by "*Gog and Magog*" no particular nation is here designated, but universality. Still more clearly will the identity of these two conflicts be seen by a reference to the sixth Vial, in which they are both described under expressions that combine these two, and prove that they are both but different accounts of what is there spoken of as the "gathering to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" "into a place called Armageddon" (chap. xvi. 16). For those armies under the sixth Vial are collected together by "the spirits of devils working miracles," which go forth "out of the mouth of the Dragon, and of the Beast, and of the false Prophet." And therefore they are all three combined; Satan described in this chapter, and the Beast and the false Prophet in the last, uniting for that one conflict. The issue of that conflict is not mentioned in the sixth Vial nor in the sixth Trumpet, but is described in the nineteenth chapter, and again resumed in this the twentieth. The only difference appears to be that here (chap. xx. 10) the devil is cast into the lake of fire not at one and the same time with the Beast and false Prophet, but after them, which might appear to indicate the event here spoken of to be in some point of view subsequent to the former. And this is confirmed by the expression here, that "the devil was cast into the lake, *where likewise the Beast and Prophet are.*" An apparent designation of later time. This coincides with the description of the same in the Vials; for it is implied in the seventh Vial being poured "on the air," *i.e.* the place of Satan, "the Prince of the air," whereas

the destruction of Antichrist at Armageddon appears to be in the sixth Vial. We had no mention of "*the beloved city*" while Babylon existed, but now that she is destroyed the Beloved City and the Bride are both seen and mentioned. The good and the evil are revealed.

St. Augustin, speaking of this as the last persecution under Antichrist for the three years and a half,² thus explains the passage: "*He shall go out to deceive the nations,*" i.e. Satan shall '*go out*' into open persecution from the hiding-places of his hate. This is the last persecution on the coming on of the judgment, which the holy Church shall suffer through the whole world, the universal city of Christ from the universal city of the devil, wherever they exist throughout the whole earth. By the expression '*on the breadth of the earth,*' is signified the Church throughout all nations; '*the compassing the camp*' intimates the exceeding straitness and pressure; and the '*camp of the Saints*' as a warfare, in which the Church will not desert."³ The name Gog he interprets as a roof or covering, from which this universal going forth will be; and St. Jerome, likewise, as a house or roof; but Aretas gives another meaning, that of gathering together. Perhaps a clue to much of the Apocalypse might be found in the mystic names: Babylon, the confusion of good and evil in the Church; and when this has ended in the fall of Babylon, wickedness going forth in all nations from its hiding-place of Gog and Magog; the wicked one being revealed; and all at last meeting in Armageddon, the place of decision or cutting off, while throughout the whole Jerusalem is "*the vision of peace.*"

The manifold variety of type may be here observed; the army of the Saints is described, and then a fresh

² Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 13. ³ Ibid. lib. xx. cap. 11.

vision introduced by the way, in which the same persons are sitting on thrones in heavenly places, to indicate the power and safety through these trials of those who have their affections in Heaven. In the former description the wicked are destroyed by "the sword that goeth forth out of the mouth" of the Word of God, but here by the "*fire descending from Heaven.*" Here they are "*encircling the camp*" when the fire comes down to devour them, in the former description they are slain in battle. The fire descending is the figure of the Prophet; "I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles:"⁴ as also alluding to Elijah, who is to precede the great Day.

The description, indeed, in Ezekiel furnishes most of the emblems;⁵ and therefore serves as a basis to connect the various accounts of the same: it is there repeated that "it shall be in the latter days:"—there is the armed gathering of the sixth Trumpet—"all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army" (xxxviii. 15); then the solemn call to "ravenous birds of every sort to devour" (xxxix. 4). The *innumerable army* is expressed "as a cloud to cover the land" (xxxviii. 9, 16): it is "an evil thought" to go against "them that are at rest," "dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates" (ver. 11); for the Saints of God are unarmed in this conflict. "For our King," says St. Jerome, "is the Prince of Peace, and in peace His dwelling-place."⁶ And all this is the bringing of the true Israel of God out of all lands, as "sanctified in the sight of many nations" (xxxviii. 16). Then follows in the Prophet the detailed description of the measuring of the Temple of God, and the return of His glory to dwell there.

⁴ Ezek. xxxix. 6. ⁵ See p. 157. ⁶ In Ezek. ad loc.

Perhaps the universality of this contest, or "*encircling*" the camp of the Saints, may be something of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks, that "every man's sword shall be against his brother;"⁷ and such as our Lord describes in the season of "the great tribulation," when a man's foes shall be of his own household.

"Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken."⁸

SECTION IX

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

CHAP. XX. "11 And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Every thing comes out in due order—accumulating and explaining the former figures; corresponding with, correcting, and carrying out the former visions. He had spoken of the first resurrection, but now it is the second—"the *white throne*." We have throughout had the colour "*white*" of every thing belonging to Christ, as in anticipation of this His "*throne*." We have had many thrones in Heaven, but they are gone, and we now have but one—the "*great white throne*." We have had the sun smitten

⁷ Isa. viii. 8.

⁸ See Ezek. xxxix. 8.

and the stars falling, we have had islands and mountains moved,¹ and then the same taking wing, but here "*the earth and the Heaven*" are flying, nay, are "*fled away*" before His face: not only are they "not found," as the mountains before (chap. xvi. 20), but, in the words of the Prophet, "the wind carried them away, that *no place was found for them.*"² "It is the Heaven and earth, in which," says Cœumenius, "the transgression was."

We have had "the time of the dead" spoken of in the seventh Trumpet; and there the contest which has been just described seems (as also in the Book of Daniel) combined with the judgment—"the nations" being "angry," "the wrath" of God, and "the season of the dead that they should be judged" (chap. xi. 18). "*I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.*" To "*stand*" is as in judgment. "Who shall *stand* when He appeareth?" "The ungodly shall not *stand* in the judgment." Who is "worthy to *stand* before the Son of Man?"³ "We shall all *stand* before the judgment-seat of Christ."⁴

"*And the books were opened:*" or, rather, without the article, not "*the books,*" but "*books*" indefinitely, many books, such as are spoken of throughout the Scriptures as the registry of all actions. As it is said, "A book of remembrance was written before Him,"⁵ containing the sighs of the righteous. "Are not these things noted in Thy book?"⁶ And of evil deeds also, "Behold, it is written before Me: I will recompense."⁷ Many books, the book of each man's life; the books of the written

¹ See pp. 102, 103, 104, 299. ² Dan. ii. 35.

³ Luke xxi. 36.

⁴ Rom. xiv. 10.

⁵ Mal. iii. 16.

⁶ Ps. lvi. 8.

⁷ Isa. lxx. 6.

Word of God; the book also of conscience and of memory. "A certain divine power," says St. Augustin, "is to be understood, by which it will take place that to each person all his works, whether good or evil, will be recalled to memory, and be intuitively seen with marvellous celerity; so that knowledge may accuse or excuse the conscience. Which divine power has been named a book."⁸ Bede says, "The deeds of the righteous being brought forth, by comparison with which the reprobate are condemned, as in the opening of the books, reading of the good they themselves might have done." This, indeed, may be part of the judging often attributed to the Saints, as before in "the first resurrection" "judgment was given unto them."

"According to their works—according to their works," twice repeated, this is always the burden of the judgment. But there is also another book often alluded to, in which are enrolled the names of the heavenly citizens, not to be confused with the former books. "*And another book was opened, which is the book of life.*" In allusion to this book, it is said; "Rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven."⁹ "Whose names are in the book of life."¹ And "he that overcometh, I will not blot his name out of the book of life."² "The Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world."³ It is in conformity with Daniel, who mentions both the former books and this also. "The judgment was set, and the books were opened."⁴ And of the other, "Every one shall be delivered that shall be found written in the book."⁵ To

⁸ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 14.

⁹ Luke x. 20.

¹ Phil. iv. 3.

² Rev. iii. 5.

³ Rev. xiii. 8.

⁴ Dan. vii. 10.

⁵ Dan. xii. 1.

which passage allusion is here distinctly made; "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" St. Augustin speaks of this last book as the predestination unto life which is in the knowledge, or the book, of God. So likewise Bede. "*Death and hell were cast into the lake,*"—death, because there is no more death; "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;"⁶ and hell, or hades, because there is no longer any intermediate or separate state.

"O how wise is he to whom ever without ceasing sounds the trumpet voice, 'Rise, ye dead, and come to judgment!' O how wise is he who so acts and so lives, in all that he does, as he will wish to have acted and to have lived at the Day of Judgment!"⁷

⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 26.

⁷ Cornel. à Lapide ad loc.

PART VII

The Heavenly Jerusalem; or, The Church Triumphant.

SECTION I

THE NEW CREATION

CHAP. XXI. “¹ And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea is no more. ² And the holy city, a new Jerusalem, I saw coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God. ⁴ And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be any more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; for the former things are passed away.”

ST. JOHN had spoken of “the Beloved City,” in the contest of Antichrist, and now he describes her as purified by those fires and revealed in glory. And all this is in the order of the Prophet Ezekiel; for after his account of the armies of Gog and Magog, with which the foregoing has been throughout so closely connected, there ensues the vision of the Temple and the Holy City, the measuring of its dimensions, of the return of God’s Glory, and of the Holy Waters.¹

¹ See Ezek. from chap. xxxviii. to xlviii.

Again ; he had spoken of the earth and Heaven having fled away from the face of the Judge ; and now they are spoken of as "*passed away*," and the "*new Heaven and new earth*" foretold by Isaiah are seen ; which St. Peter has told us should succeed, when the Heavens and the earth which now are shall have been dissolved by fire, and passed away.²

"*And the sea is no more*"—"perhaps literally, as dried up or changed," says St. Augustin, "in that conflagration of the world." Or it may be mystically, according to the symbolism of this book, the old "*Heaven and earth*" of the former Israel having passed away ; and "*the sea*," the emblem of the Gentiles,³ being "*no more*." Or morally, with Ecumenius, no more that emblem of storms, and dangers, and this troublesome life. Or sacramentally, as the brazen sea in the Temple, and the "*sea of glass*" before described in Heaven ; no more need of sacramental washing, for "*God Himself shall be with them*."

The question is whether this vision is of the Church militant or triumphant, whether before or after the judgment. St. Augustin maintains the latter ; and Tichonius, "all this he hath spoken of the Church after the resurrection." Although this is doubtless the case, yet it may in some measure include both, according to the type of the same in Ezekiel, which refers to the past, "Show the house to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern" (chap. xliii. 10) ; and at the same time to the future and spiritual Temple, "The place of My throne, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever" (chap. xliii. 7). In like manner, here it is built on the foundation of the twelve Apostles ; it is described in Heaven according to that primitive pattern

² Isa. lxxv. 17 ; 2 Peter iii. 13. ³ See Ecclus. xxxix. 23.

below ; and St. John sees "*the Holy City coming down*," i.e. in the act of descending, "*from God out of Heaven*."

The account seems to commence with the "*coming down*," which might be of our Lord's Incarnation ; or of the Church of Pentecost, heard as a rushing mighty wind, and seen in fiery tongues ; and, as St. Augustin says, "The city is said to descend from Heaven, because the grace is from Heaven by which God hath made her." "From Heaven hath she descended from her beginning, since which, through the time of this world, by the grace of God coming down from above through the laver of regeneration, the citizens of Heaven are multiplied. But through the last judgment of God by His Son Jesus Christ, so great and so new will appear its brightness from the gift of God, that no vestige of its old state will remain."⁴

"*The Holy City*" and "*the Bride*" are evidently in contrast with the Babylon and the Harlot. "Prepared and adorned," says Bede, "as a Bride for her husband, because there is another Jerusalem adorned not for her husband but for an adulterer." This connection with the Harlot is proved by a reference to the basis of these prophecies in Ezekiel, as it has been throughout, and that the Harlot has been the state of Christendom. "Now let them put away their whoredom, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever."⁵

"*And God Himself shall be with them*." "As a king," says Cornelius à Lapide, "is with his people, a father with his children, a master with his disciples, so God will be for ever with the blessed in Heaven, refreshing, feeding, gladdening, blessing them ; He will be with them with an ever-abiding Presence, Who is seen by them in this

⁴ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 17.

⁵ Ezek. xliii. 9.

life as one absent or hidden. For in Heaven they will see God as present face to face."

This blessedness is described by negatives—"no death, no sorrow, no pain," as being beyond what hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. To have no tears would be much, but for "God" to "*wipe away*" their "*tears*" expresses the tender care of God, as being Himself their Comforter. In the beautiful words of the Prophet, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."⁶ On the passage where these words occur in Isaiah St. Augustin says; "There after mortal labours and sorrows we shall be comforted, like little children 'borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees.' With such most gently blandishing aids shall that unwonted blessedness receive us like inexperienced little ones. Then we shall see, and our heart shall rejoice. He hath not expressed what we shall see: what is it but God?"⁷

This is the great fulfilment of the word "Emmanuel." But there is a foretaste and anticipation even now, with the pure in heart who see God.⁸

SECTION II

WORDS OF HIM THAT SAT ON THE THRONE.

CHAP. XXI. "⁵ And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write, for these words are true and faithful. ⁶ And He said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. ⁷ He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his

⁶ Isa. lxvi. 13. ⁷ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 21.

⁸ See pp. 127, 128.

God, and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and sinners, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Our Lord is again introduced as at the opening of the Apocalypse: while the words and clauses resemble the same, with that solemn repetition and asseveration so peculiar to St. John's manner—a style so entirely his own that no other is to be found at all resembling it. To speak of it as a human style were irreverent and unworthy; for no words can convey its character—the solemn and impressive simplicity, a voice as it were angelic, a character of writing so deeply filled with that divine love, which very love itself is truth, and teacheth all things. To read his words often, and again and again, is better than any comment on the same, unless it be from that rich and ample treasury which Scripture itself supplies. His constant iteration and reassertion is like the "Amen" of our Lord Himself, which St. John so often mentions in his Gospel; as if intensely anxious that others should accept the truth, with the importance of which he was himself filled, as all in all. He lingers on the words, he repeats, he returns to them.

"*I am the Alpha and the Omega.*:" "As He testified this," says Bede, "of Himself at the beginning of the book,¹ so here is it for the third time repeated, that as Esaias saith, 'I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God.'² And that as this account is of the end of all things, He may be understood to be the Finisher as He was the Maker of the world." We read in his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word:"

¹ Rev. i. 8, 11. See pp. 11, 12. ² Isa. xliv. 6.

“all things were made by Him ;” and now it is He that says, “ *Behold, I make all things new.*”

“ *Of the water of life*”—alluding to baptism, says Tichonius. And Bede ; “ From this fountain of life He refreshes now in the way those that believe, of which to those that overcome He gives in their own country abundantly to drink. And both ‘*freely* ;’ for life eternal in Christ Jesus is the gift of God. ‘And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’” It is abundantly, at the very Fountain itself. “ I will extend peace to her like a river.”³

“ *The fearful*” are here coupled with “ *the unbelieving.*” It is the fear that consists in fearing man rather than God. “ Woe be to fearful hearts, and faint hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways ! Woe unto him that is faint-hearted ! for he believeth not.” This fearfulness is by the son of Sirach opposed throughout to the fear of God.⁴ “ Among the reprobate,” says Tertullian, “ nay, before them all, the fearful have their portion in the lake of fire.” “ *Sinners,*” again, are connected with “ *the abominable,*” as Gentiles and idolaters in the sacred language of the Law. The sins specified are much the same as those mentioned in the sixth Trumpet.⁵ But “ *liars*” are here added, as twice afterwards, with reference perhaps to Antichrist. “ *Idolaters*” may be referring to spiritual idolatry ; for as the Jerusalem of old was in Babylon purged of idolatry, it might seem improbable that Babylon should represent positive idolatry in the Christian Church.

It may be observed how remarkably the Apocalypse is in keeping throughout, so that when it describes the wicked who are shut out from the City of God, it still for the most part speaks of them in expressions from the

³ Isa. lxvi. 12. ⁴ Ecclus. ii. 12, 17. ⁵ See p. 167.

Law. As the mystic allegories and symbols are always maintained, and figurative language of the same sublime and striking character, so is the ancient Jerusalem as the basis and the divinely intended type of all.

SECTION III

THE ANGEL SHOWS THE BRIDE

CHAP. XXI. "9 And there came one of the seven Angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in *the* spirit to a great and high mountain; and shewed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: *and* her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12 *And* having a wall great and high, *and* having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city having twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb."

"*One of the seven Angels*" of judgment showed the Harlot:¹ and one of the same now shows "*the Bride*;" that "glorious Church" which Christ would "present unto Himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."² Both visions correspond, as subsidiary or supplemental to the main course of the prophecies: he is taken apart, in one case to the wilderness, where he sees a City, the Harlot; here to the "*mountain*," where he sees "*a City, the Bride*." And there is an allusion, as in most of the figures, to the historic Israel; first was the wilderness, to which the

¹ See p. 303.

² Eph. v. 27.

Apostolic Woman had fled, and where the Harlot was found; and then afterwards the mountain; "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."³ So was it with Israel of old.

"After the ruin of Babylon," says Bede, "the holy city, the Lamb's Bride is seen on the mountain; for the stone cut out of the mountain without hands hath broken to pieces the image of worldly glory, and hath grown into a great mountain and filled the whole world." "*The wife of the Lamb,*" as washed in His blood," say the Greek commentators, "as taken from His side in death, as Eve from the side of Adam. A city, as the dwelling-place of the Trinity; a Bride, as joined to her Lord in consummate union indivisible; adorned and all-glorious within according to the Psalmist."

"*He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain.*" It is all from Ezekiel: "The hand of the Lord was upon me—and brought me in the visions of God—and set me upon a very high mountain; by which was as the frame of a city."⁴ "And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the gate toward the East."⁵ The Lord entered by the eastern gate, therefore shall it be shut, and opened for none but for the prince.⁶ Such was the coming of Christ's glory from the East into His Church, as so often alluded to before. But here "*the Holy City descends out of Heaven, having the glory of God*" as already dwelling within her; above the brightness of the sun, as afterwards appears, and yet with a glory not terrible as He appeared on Mount Sinai; not as "a consuming fire," but beautiful and precious; not transient, but ever abiding unchanged as a jewel's light.

³ Heb. xii. 22.

⁴ Ezek. xl. 1, 2.

⁵ Ezek. xliii. 2.

⁶ Ezek. xliv. 1-3.

"*Like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper,*" as keeping the connection with Him that "sat on the throne" in the former vision, Who was "to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone;"⁷ and with the Urim and Thummim of Israel.

"*Having the glory of God;*" for then," says Bede, "she will appear more glorious through the Spirit by Whom the Bridegroom was conceived and born, when worthy fully to bear the image of the heavenly: and as '*a precious stone,*' for Christ Himself says, 'The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them.'⁸

"*A wall great and high,*" that none can enter but those of the true Israel admitted by the gates: "the solidity impregnable," says Bede, "of faith, hope, and charity; or the Lord Himself protecting His Church." "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls."⁹ That the presence of God is this wall might be inferred from this, that "the wall of it was of jasper" (ver. 18). But the jasper is not only "the first foundation" (ver. 19); but "the glory of God," the light of the city, is "like a jasper stone." The wall is of jasper, and the glory of God within of jasper, in beautiful accordance with the Prophet: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."¹ "*A jasper stone, clear as crystal;*" or rather "crystallizing," of starry diamond-like effulgence. Like the expression of the poet, "*stellatus iaspide.*"²

"*And at the gates twelve Angels,*" implying the one family and household of God, the Church of Angels and men; or as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; as Angels that carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, and

⁷ Chap. iv. 3. See pp. 60, 62.

⁸ John xvii. 22.

⁹ Isa. xxvi. 1.

¹ Zech. ii. 5.

² Virg. *Æn.* iv. 261.

rejoice over the repenting sinner ; that separate the good, and gather the elect from the four winds ; Angels which in the Apocalypse sealed the elect of God, or protected those that were sealed. Or else to be understood according to the symbolism of the Apocalypse, as we had before the Angels of the Seven Churches—angelic watchers corresponding with the sacred “keepers of the door” of the Temple.

“*And names written thereon of the twelve tribes.*” Aretas and Bede both say, in allusion to the high priest’s bearing the names of the twelve tribes in the breastplate when he appeared before the Lord or went into the holy place.³ In exquisite harmony is it all combined with the previous vision of the sealing of the twelve tribes.⁴ And also with the mystic type of Ezekiel ; “And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel.”⁵ So wonderfully is the figurative pattern of the temporal Jerusalem fulfilled in the heavenly and eternal. “I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever.”⁶

The gates are “*of the twelve tribes of Israel,*” and “*three*” on each side, on the “*east,*” and “*north,*” and “*south,*” and “*west ;*” for “they shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven.”⁷ And those that are shut out from these gates are afterwards marked by the same legal types of rejection. “By the Twelve,” says Tichonius, “is figured the perfection of the Church in the faith of the Trinity through the four quarters of the world.” So also Bede and Aretas. And all these from St. Austin.

It is especially to be noticed that the “*twelve founda-*

³ Exod. xlviii. 9, 29.

⁴ See pp. 115, 119.

⁵ Ezek. xlviii. 31.

⁶ Eccles. iii. 14.

⁷ Matt. viii. 11.

tions" on which the city is built are not the twelve patriarchs, but have "*in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb*;" but on the gates are the twelve tribes, as intimating that they who enter in by these gates are of the true Israel of God, the "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," "called out of darkness into His marvellous light;"⁸ "the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad"⁹ entering into the heavenly Jerusalem. This remarkable distinction that the twelve foundations are the twelve Apostles proves that it is in the Christian Church, the "new Jerusalem," that all the promises made to the Fathers and the descriptions of the Prophets are fulfilled in a sense heavenly and spiritual; and serves to put a stop to all carnal Judaizing conceits of an earthly Jerusalem to be rebuilt. "*On the gates*" are the "*names of the twelve tribes*," for "salvation is of the Jews;" but they that enter in by these gates, and "walk in the light" of the city, are stated to be "the nations;" they are the "peculiar people called into His marvellous light," for "the Lamb is the light thereof." "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"¹ In what but this new and glorious life from the dead shall the promises to Abraham be fulfilled when his seed are as the stars of Heaven?

SECTION IV

THE MEASURING OF THE HOLY CITY

CHAP. XXI. "15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lieth quadrangular, and the length is as

⁸ 1 Peter ii. 9. ⁹ James i. 1. ¹ Rom. xi. 15.

large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of *the* angel. ¹⁸ And the building of the wall of it *was of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass. ¹⁹ And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰ The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate *was* of one pearl; and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

The measuring of the City by the Angel is as in the Prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah, and in the former vision of this book, denoting the perfection of God, according to the pattern of things in Heaven, by Him Who hath preordained all things "in measure and number;" and here expressed by numerous symbols looking before and after.¹ The rod is of *Gold* as being the heavenly consummation, as the precious things in the temple are of gold. Bede interprets it of "Christ Who is the Wisdom of God, Who reaching from one end to another, mightily and sweetly doth order all things,² appointing them in number, and measure, and weight, and to each of the faithful distributing spiritual gifts." "*And the city is quadrangular,*" τετράγωνος—the term used by the heathen philosopher for the perfection of man, τετράγωνος ἀνευ ψογοῦ³—consisting of right angles such as are formed by the figure of the Cross. It is also foursquare (as in Ezekiel xlvi. 16), for it is "*equal in length and breadth,*" and not this only, but also in "*height,*" and therefore a solid

¹ See pp. 116, 119. ² Wisdom viii. 1. ³ Arist. Eth.

cubic form, denoting firmness ; such a shape as is incapable of being overthrown. "The solid square," says Bede, "intimates the subsisting in firm peace." The square of perfection—as the four-sided altar, as Christ's Incarnation set forth in the quadriform Gospel ; but the four cherubic forms are not here, for there is no temple ; not the four Living Creatures, representing His manifestation in the visible creation ; but the living stones, resplendent each with the Light of the Lamb. The "*measuring*" of "*the wall*" afterwards must be of its thickness ; for it is by "*cubits*," whereas the height is by "*furlongs*." But every thing by multiples of the Sacred Twelve. "*Equal*" every way "*in length*" and "*breadth*," and "*height*," as setting forth the love of God infinite and perfect on every side. "To comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height—the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."⁴ It is "*according to the measurement of a man*." It is measured as to suit human capacities and conceptions, though it be of what is altogether incomprehensible and divine. But this measure of a man is that of the "*Angel*" who appears as a man ; the measure of an Angel and man is one. And thus it will be one measure to both of glory and bliss ; for they that are accounted worthy to attain that life are equal to the Angels.

"*The city of pure gold, like clear glass*," as purified in the fires of probation ; as gold from the love of God, which never faileth, the transparency of perfect love, the mirror of truth ; that bliss which alone is substantial and pure—of gold and like glass. Pure spirits in the blissful vision of God, where no evil thought can defile them or stain their inward purity of soul. "Or clear as glass,"

⁴ Eph. iii. 18.

says Bede, "from the mutual thoughts of each being clearly known to each other." And St. Gregory, on the Book of Job; "By gold and glass we understand that heavenly country, that society of blessed citizens, where the saints in the supreme brightness of bliss are as a city constructed of gold; and as that brightness is reciprocally open to them in each other's breasts, this very gold is described as like pure glass."⁵

"*And the foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones;*" as fulfilling the Prophet, "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires;"⁶ alluding to the type in Solomon's Temple,⁷ and the cherished expectation of the Jews that "Jerusalem shall be built up with sapphires, and emeralds, and precious stone—thy walls with pure gold—the streets of Jerusalem paved with beryl."⁸ "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." But here all perfect in order and arrangement, each to its place in exquisite beauty and fitness, as filling up the predestination of God; the vesture of the Bride, "all glorious within," "her clothing of gold," "wrought about with divers colours."⁹ The mysterious breastplate of precious stones is now extended into the twelve foundations of the City of God. The oracle of God, Light and Perfection, was found in the twelve stones, on the breast of the high priest; so now is Christ in the Twelve, they are the Apostles "*of the Lamb.*" His light is in the twelve stones with which the foundations are adorned—Himself the one Foundation. In the twelve stones were the names of the twelve patriarchs; "Every one with his name shall they be,"¹ as fathers of the twelve tribes: so here as spiritual fathers

⁵ On Job xxviii. 17.

⁶ Isa. liv. 11.

⁷ 1 Chron. xxix. 2.

⁸ Tobit xiii. 17.

⁹ Ps. xlv.

¹ Exod. xxviii. 21.

bringing children to God, the names of the twelve Apostles.

Again; the twelve stones on the high priest's breast were in positions prescribed, each according to its place, each in its own order. Thus is it here. In the words of the ancient Hymn

“Suis coaptantur locis
Per manum artificis.”

Stones of the heavenly Jerusalem,—each stone worked in noiseless stillness into the living structure, as was typified in the building of Solomon's Temple, each stone fitted to its place and chosen. “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.”² It is “the household of God built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.” Faith in the Incarnation of Christ, which is the one foundation, but in the twelve Apostles according to the diversity of personal character, fruitful in manifold graces of the spirit and “diversity of gifts.” Hence, also, many beatitudes as adapted to each; and, as St. Paul describes, “One star differeth from another star in brightness, so also is the resurrection of the dead;”³ indicating not degrees of brightness only, but also manifold distinctness and variety. There are “many members, yet but one body.”⁴ “In My Father's house are many mansions.”

Bede observes that when Isaiah speaks of her foundations being laid with sapphires, he adds, as if in explanation; “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” “The precious stones,” says the same writer, “are adapted each severally to the foundations, because although all are perfect by whom the City of God on the holy mount is founded and adorned, shining with the light of spiritual grace, yet to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom,

² Mal. iii. 17. ³ 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. ⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 20.

to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healing, to another kinds of tongues by the same Spirit; of these the Artificer and Builder is God, Who is the foundation of foundations; Who deigned for us to be made an High Priest, that He might wash with His own Blood and consecrate the walls of that city. Hence on the breasts of the chief priests the twelve stones were enjoined to be placed inscribed with the names of the patriarchs, that by a most beautiful mystery it might be set forth that all the spiritual graces which the Saints might severally and partially be gifted with, existed in completeness and perfection in the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

Many writers—as Aretas, Œcumenius, Ludolphus on the Gospels, Cornelius à Lapide, and even Bede—with great beauty give a mystical and spiritual meaning to each severally of these twelve stones. So also in some measure does St. Gregory (on Job, chap. xxviii. 16). These are all too uncertain, and with no sufficient authority to support them. But as wisdom is more precious than rubies;"⁵ so there is nothing, humanly speaking, more delightful to contemplate than the diversities of character in good men; such diversities are here set forth in the "living stones" of every colour and variety in beauty and grace.

But the obvious meaning of the apostolic foundations thus marked is great and important. There is but one foundation, which is Christ; and yet the foundations are many, or, rather, have in them many names. There is One in Twelve, and the Twelve are in One; it is of unity, and perfection, and of universality: emphatically "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." And therefore a "continuing city."⁶ A Church must be

⁵ Prov. iii. 15.

⁶ Heb. xi. 10; xiii. 14.

built not only on Christ, but also on the Apostolic Twelve in doctrine and in discipline. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Such is the measured pattern. The names of the patriarchs were in the twelve stones; and in them were contained all the tribes of Israel, all the holy nation. So here are the twelve Apostles, and in them all the Church of the redeemed. Hence, also, the twelve foundations are well applied, as in Cornelius à Lapide, to the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed, those immutable verities on which the Church is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. "On the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets we are built," says St. Augustin, "into Christ."⁷

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls"—all of the same celestial substance, as on every side of the world the entrance is but of one kind, the knowledge of God in Christ, the Incarnation, which the pearl signifies, the one pearl of great price. *"Each several gate of one"*—not made up of many, but one, great, indivisible, entire. There is One only "by whom we have access by faith."⁸ "Through Him we have access by One Spirit."⁹ The door is one, which is Christ. "By the pearls," says Tichonius, "he has designated Apostles as opening to us the door of everlasting life." One foundation, yet twelve; one gate, yet twelve also. "All the glory of the Head," says Bede, "is referred to the body. As the true Light, which lighteth every man, hath given to the saints to be the light of the world; so also as He is the pearl of great price, which the merchant man sold all that he had to buy; He compares those that are His own to the brightness of pearls."

St. Augustin explains it: "The Apostles and Prophets

⁷ In Ps. lxxxvi.

⁸ Rom. v. 2.

⁹ Eph. ii. 18.

are foundations, because their authority is the support of our weakness. They are the gates, because through them we enter the kingdom of God ; and while by their means we enter, we enter through Christ Himself the gate. The one gate is Christ, and the twelve gates are Christ ; for Christ dwells in the twelve gates. There is a deep mystery in the number twelve. ‘Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ The twelve is here put for universality, as spoken of all who sit in judgment ; in the same manner all who enter the city enter by one or other of the twelve gates. There are four quarters of the globe, East, West, North, and South. Our Lord declares that He will call His sheep from the four winds ; from all the four winds the Church is called. It is called in the Trinity, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost : four, then, being thrice taken, the twelve is found.”¹

SECTION V

NO TEMPLE SEEN THEREIN

CHAP. XXI. “²² And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ²³ And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. ²⁴ And the nations shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. ²⁵ And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day : for there shall be no night there. ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. ²⁷ And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, and which worketh abomination or a lie : but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

“ *And I saw no temple therein :*” in the visions of

¹ In Ps. lxxxvii.

Heaven throughout the Apocalypse the temple and the temple-service has supplied the figures, as denoting that it spoke of the Church as yet militant on earth before the final judgment; but this has now ceased, the temple is no more, there is none seen in Heaven. For St. Augustin rightly considers this vision as without all doubt to speak of the final state of the blessed.¹ Where there is no more sin, no sacrifice is needed; and where there is no sacrifice, there is no priest; and where there is no priest, there is no temple. Where no "House of Prayer," no sacramental veil, but faith lost in sight, and hope in fruition, and fear in perfect love.

"He had spoken of a city," says Bede, "as built of stones, and would intimate that it is not thereby signified that any material edifice is the rest of the Saints; for God is their one and only habitation, their light, and rest." And here we may observe again throughout the incomparable beauty and music of the language, equal to that in the lament of Babylon.² In the former visions of Heaven there were sounds of thanksgiving, voices, and mighty thunderings, but here it is all awful and sublime stillness, unspeakable silence, the silence of God and eternity; peace passing all understanding, in fulness and perfection "the vision of peace."

"*The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof:*" as our Lord said to His disciples, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."³ "For God is in the Church," says Tichonius, "and the Church in God." "In Deo est Ecclesia, et in Ecclesiâ Deus." "*The city needs not sun nor moon;*" "for not by the light and elements of the world," says

¹ Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 17.

² See pp. 358, 367.

³ John xiv. 20.

the same writer, "is the Church governed, but by Christ her eternal Sun is she led through the darkness of the world; not by the visible sun, but by Him who hath said, 'I am the light of the world.'" "For the light itself," says Bede, "by which we are now guided as we walk by the way, is that which we shall enjoy in our country. Informed by the same, we now discern between good and evil; but then, made blessed by it, we shall see nothing but good." "*For the glory of God doth lighten it,*" when all things are lost in the beatific Presence of God; "*and the Lamb*" is "*the Light thereof,*" the visible luminary or sun of that world is the Incarnate Word, God and Man.

And here we may observe, again, the distinction from the previous visions of peace, while the Church was yet militant upon earth. For in the former case neither sun nor any heat shall harm them, but here there is neither sun nor moon at all. Before "they serve God day and night in His temple" (chap. vii. 15), but here there is no temple at all and no night at all. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an Everlasting Light; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."⁴

"*And the nations shall walk in the light,*" as intimating that this is the true fulfilment of Isaiah, the true coming in of the old world into the true Jerusalem. "Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought."⁵ "Gates open continually," that is, eternal peace. "By the '*nations,*'" says Berengaudus, "are designated the elect.

⁴ Isa. lx. 19, 20.

⁵ Isa. lx. 11.

But how shall they *'walk?'* not in body, but in mind; not by change of place, but by contemplations of Godhead, omnipotence, and majesty." "*And the kings of the earth*"—all that partakes of the true Anointing shall thither be brought: "the kings of the East," spoken of in the sixth Vial; the many crowns, with the King of kings. "The kings of the earth," says Tichonius, "are the sons of God, *i.e.* Christians." "The kings he speaks of," says Bede, "are spiritual." And of "the nations walking in the light" he interprets the meaning to be, that "the same Lamb which is now the way to those that travel, will then be the Life to the citizens of that city." And the gates will ever be open, as intimating perfect security; whereas He now says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Whatever is precious, whatever is truly great and good upon earth, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," it shall be brought into that city; all that the Prophets have spoken of the riches of the Gentiles shall flow into it; the wise men of the East with their first-fruits shall be there, the special gift of faith, more precious than of gold that perisheth. St. Paul says to his Churches: "Ye are our glory and joy," our "crown of rejoicing."⁶ "The presenting of these to God," says Berengaudus, "is the bringing in of their glory. 'Children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.'⁷ Thus," he adds, "their spiritual children shall rejoice in the Apostles that bare them, and the Apostles in such their children."

"*For there shall be no night there.*" This he introduces here as alluding to the expression of Isaiah, that "the gates shall not be shut day nor night;" for St. John alters it, "the gates shall not be shut, indeed, *by day*, but night

⁶ 1 Thess. ii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 14.

⁷ Prov. xvii. 6.

there will not be at all." He afterwards (chap. xxii. 5) introduces the same expression, "there shall be no night," with another reference as not needing a candle. "*There shall be no night there,*" for night is remedial of infirmity and restorative of weariness, but there will be no weariness and no infirmity: "The soul through wisdom healed; the body by resurrection renewed."⁸ The path of the just, which is as the shining light, will then have increased into the perfect day.⁹

"*There shall enter nothing that defileth, or that worketh abomination or a lie;*" this is the perfect fulfilment of the Law, of which nothing shall fail; the spotless Bride which Christ shall present to Himself. And the expressions, though taken from the Law of old, yet seem to have an especial reference to Antichrist: "*nothing that defileth,*" or hath on it the mark of the Beast; "*nothing that worketh abomination,*" belonging to him who is "the abomination of desolation." Again, and afterwards a third time, is it mentioned that "all liars" (ver. 8), he that "*maketh a lie*" (ver. 27), "he that loveth or maketh a lie" (chap. xxii. 15), are excluded from that city, as alluding to that "strong delusion" under which they shall, as St. Paul says, "believe a lie" or the false one;¹ and St. John, "Who is a *liar* but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist."² "Speaking *lies* in hypocrisy"³ is the very character of the apostasy. "*Making a lie*" is a remarkable expression, *making* or *working an abomination, i.e.* an idol, *or a lie;*" by "*making a lie*" indicating every work and action, as St. John shows in his Epistles, which is contrary to the everlasting truth of God, and which, therefore, is but a deceiving of our own souls.

⁸ Civ. Dei, lib. xix. cap. 11.

⁹ Prov. iv. 18.

¹ 2 Thess ii. 11.

² 1 John ii. 22.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 2.

“*But they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life*”—for “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship the Beast whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life” (chap. xiii. 8). It is keeping up to the last, the expression of the Prophet Daniel, on which it is founded: “Thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”⁴

SECTION VI

THE RIVER AND TREE OF LIFE

CHAP. XXII. “¹And he shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ²In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* a tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: ⁴And they shall see His face; and His name *shall be* in their foreheads. ⁵And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

In Ezekiel’s description there was the vision of waters from “under the threshold of the house;” and in Zechariah, the waters from the mystical Jerusalem;¹ but those were of prior and less plenary fulfilment: this is “*clear as crystal*,” as implying perfect purity of heart, and it is “*out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*.” In Zechariah they are called “living waters;” and in Ezekiel it is said that “everything shall live whither the river cometh:” but this is the very fountain of life, of which it is said; “For with Thee is the well of life.” “Who only hath

⁴ Dan. xii. 1.¹ Zech. xiv. 8.

immortality." "Having life in Himself." With Thee is light, and no darkness at all. With Thee is life, and no more death. The rivers of bliss at His right hand for evermore. "The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God."²

It is out of "*the throne*" in Christ's kingdom, even "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." It is the water of life, ἵδωρ ζωῆς; it shall be to him, He says, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," ἵδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζῶν αἰώνιον.³ The water of life is the Spirit which He will give.

For two things is "*water*" necessary—for cleansing and for thirst; and these represent the spiritual wants of man. "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "My soul is athirst for God." It is but as a drop here for refreshment by the way: there lost in the sea of the goodness of God. "In the river of water like unto crystal," says Tichonius, "he would have us to understand the fount of Baptism in the midst of the Church proceeding from God and Christ." But Bede very well adds; "This river of life flowing in the midst of the city indicates not the celebration of Baptism, but that the fruit of that sacrament is revealed. For now the Church sows in the Spirit; but then of the Spirit shall it reap everlasting life." "*Cleat as crystal*"—perfect peace in the knowledge of God, undisturbed and passionateless, unlike "the troubled sea" of this life "when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."⁴

"*And the tree of life*" is restored in the true Paradise; and as before the one foundation of Christ was found to be in the twelve foundations with twelve precious stones of every colour, so here the one "*tree of life*" bears

² Ps. xlv. 4.

³ John iv. 14.

⁴ Isa. lviii. 20.

"*twelve manner of fruits.*" And as before there were to the city twelve gates of pearl, so "*every month*" in the year doth the tree bear these fruits. And as before "*the nations*" walked in the light of that city, so now "*the leaves of the tree*" are for "*the healing of the nations.*" So does St. John love to linger on the Divine theme, expressing the same with fresh diversity of figures, of Health, and Life, and Light: allowing us to rest on no one symbol, but on the great realities which they in all their fulness but feebly serve to express.

Thus as the Holy Scriptures opened with Paradise and the fall of man, so do they end with his restoration to a better Paradise.

But there is a difficulty here about the "*tree of life*"—for our own version, "*on either side of the river,*" would imply more than one tree of life. And it is so taken by Cornelius à Lapide, Berengaudus, and some others. This would correspond also with the passage in Ezekiel; "By the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat" (*ἐνθὲν καὶ ἐνθεν*).⁵ It would differ in this, that instead of many kinds of trees they are all here but of one kind, "*the tree of life.*" Further, in support of this mode of understanding it, might be mentioned that the article does not occur here as it does in the Greek version of Genesis, it is "a tree of life," not "the tree of life," as it is there.⁶ But then the article here is also absent from "the river of life;" implying in both cases a River and a Tree not to be confounded with any other mentioned in Scripture from its transcendental nature.

There has been another mode of explaining it, that

⁵ Ezek. xlvii. 12.

⁶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παραδείσου. Gen. ii. 9.

"the tree of life" is between the street of the city and the river. For Dr. Hammond observes that this expression is used by St. John when he speaks of our Lord's Cross between the two thieves, where the same words, *ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐντεῦθεν*, are translated "on either side one," *μέσον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν*, "and Jesus in the midst."⁷ So here he understands "the tree of life" to be in the midst of the two. It certainly seems more natural to consider "the tree of life" to be but one: it is more suitable to the whole description where all is returning to the unity of God—more agreeable to our Lord's words; "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."⁸ And so also again in this chapter, "that they may have right to the tree of life;" with the Greek article in both cases. The same likewise occurs more than once in the Apocryphal Scriptures.⁹

But the construction of the Greek would very well allow it to be understood as "in the midst of the river which flowed on this side and on that side of it." And thus it is taken by Dean Woodhouse, "the river which was on one side and on the other." And much the same by Dr. Wells on the Apocalypse, "in the midst of the river encompassing the street on this side and on that side."

On the sides of the River, then, not, as in Ezekiel, many trees for the solace of our weakness on earth, but the one Tree of Paradise; when the flaming sword of death is removed. Not a river dividing into four heads to replenish the earth, but one River and one Tree, restored to the unity which is in God. One river, encompassing in the midst of it "the tree of life." "*And it has twelve*

⁷ John xix. 18.

⁸ Rev. ii. 7.

⁹ See 2 Esdras vii. 53; Eccclus. xix. 19.

manner of fruits ;" for although they are entered into the one "joy of their Lord," yet in that Paradise of God are there many rewards of various kinds, as suited to the capacity of each : and not temporary only, but all through the year of eternity shall their fruit be. And not bearing fruits only—the manifold rewards of the righteous, but "*leaves also for the healing of the nations,*" the nations of the world, such as here below from their many sicknesses and infirmities have been marked in type as unfit for the Temple of God. The nations shall walk in the light of that city, as coming from the darkness ; and the leaves of that tree shall restore and heal them, as coming from the shadow of death. That "fruit which endureth for ever, wherein is security and medicine."¹

It is all the perfecting of Ezekiel's promise : "Trees whose leaf shall not fade ; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary ; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine."² It was there spoken of the kingdom of grace, but here of the kingdom of glory. "*And there shall be no more curse,*" this is added to the "*healing of the nations*" as explanatory : for the "*curse*" contains in itself death and every other evil of mortality. "Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole."³

"*And they shall see His face*"—"shall see Him face to face, not through veils and mysteries, but even as He was seen by the holy Apostles on the holy mount," as Aretas says (from Dionysius the Great); when they said ; "It is good for us to be here:" and "Let us make here three tabernacles," as wishing ever there to abide. And "*His name shall be on their foreheads*"—not engraved in plates

¹ 2 Esdras vii. 53. ² Ezek. xlvii. 12. ³ Ps. lxxx. 19.

of metal, as on the forehead of the high priest, but written by the finger of God; the seal of the Spirit; the knowledge of God, in which is eternal life.

“By the tree of life,” says Tichonius, “is understood the Cross which through the whole world, not only at all months, but all days in those that are baptized, exhibits fruit unto God.” Bede, carrying on the same: “The tree of life is seen about the fountain of life, which, whether you interpret of the glory of the Holy Cross or of the Lord Christ, even before Baptism was revealed in the Old Testament, and now as in the mystery of Baptism more clearly disclosed, endues the saints with celestial fruit. For there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. For it is the same tree which John has described in the golden Jerusalem, Moses as flourishing in Paradise, Solomon spoke of as a tree of life to those that embrace her.” “By the twelve months he intimates the whole period of life, namely, of that life of which it is said, ‘Thy years shall not fail;’ and again, ‘From one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another;’ where the present countenance of God is eternal sanity, eternal food of life.” Indeed, by the fruits every month, we may well understand the ever new and never-failing vision and fruition of Christ. “*The healing of the nations*,” adds Bede, “is full redemption, eternal blessedness. *They shall see His face*,—that reward of faith reserved for us in the vision of God, which Philip understanding to be the chief good, said, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth.’ And *there shall be no more night*; for there no frailty of body,” he says, “needs the rest of night or the light of fire, where God will be all in all, Who is the true light and eternal rest of the saints.”

"No night there, and they need no candle." It is no more the seven golden candlesticks with which the Apocalypse opened, and "one like the Son of Man," as our great High Priest, walking in the midst of the same, watching and tending on them as amidst the progress of this our night here below; but *no night, no candle needed, "for the Lord God giveth them light;"* yea, He is Himself their everlasting Light.

Perhaps the exceeding sublimity of this Divine description cannot be seen more strongly than by contrasting it with the same subject in the admirable mediæval hymn of Peter Damiani, "*Ad perennis vitæ fontem mens sitivit avida.*" After speaking of the pearls and the gold of the heavenly city, he thus proceeds with images in themselves Scriptural and beautiful, but absent from this account in the Apocalypse, so striking for its awful simplicity.

*"Flos perpetuus rosarum ver agit perpetuum,
Candent lilia, rubescit crocus, sudat balsamum.
Virent prata, vernant sata, rivi mellis influunt;
Pigmentorum spirat odor, liquor et aromatum:
Pendent poma floridorum non lapsura nemorum."*

But this St. John's account, and the last "vision of peace," is more what St. Augustin seems in vain labouring to express, and especially as it here arises out of the former visions of Heaven. "If to any were hushed the tumult of the flesh,—the images of earth, and waters, and air, hushed the poles of Heaven; yea, the very soul in herself be hushed,—all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and sign, and whatever exists in transition; since all these say, 'We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever.' If, having uttered this, they too be hushed, and He alone speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we may hear, not through tongue of flesh,

nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor dark riddle of similitude, but might hear His very Self, and other visions be withdrawn, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which now we sighed after; were not this, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?'"⁴

SECTION VII

WARNINGS RENEWED

CHAP. XXII. "6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. 7 And behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8 And it was I John who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. 9 Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am a fellow-servant, with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. 10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. 12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

We have here many things repeated after St. John's manner, for the further impressing of their importance. First, as he had stated at the commencement, *the Lord God sent His angel*; that these things were shown by angelic ministration and symbolic vision; that we may not confound it with the presence of our Lord Himself as Man in the Gospels; and hence he twice emphatically mentions that he had attempted to worship the Angel Presence,

⁴ Conf. ix. 25.

which appeared to him almost like a manifestation of Christ Himself, but was reproved for so doing.¹ "Either," as Bede says, "again stating what he had before done, or confessing that, overwhelmed in amazement at the visions, he had again attempted to worship."

It may be observed how very intimately the Person of our Lord Himself seems here combined with that of His angel; thus it is stated (*v.* 9), "I am thy fellow-servant;" and then, without any change of person, or any intimation of the change, "And, behold, I come quickly," and "I am Alpha and Omega." There is the same at the beginning of the Apocalypse, where it is not "the Son of Man, but "one like unto the Son of Man." This mode of speaking is not unusual in the Prophets, where the person of the Prophet is sometimes lost in that of the Word of God Himself, as speaking by him. St. John says, "*It was I John who heard and saw these things*;" as in his Gospel, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe;"² and then, as if fully enunciating and declaring by whom the vision was made, how it was indeed Christ Himself but by His angel, and how he came to know it was not Christ Himself; and in order to prevent any such ambiguity, he again introduces this circumstance. At all events, his recurring to the prohibition marks its importance. Again, together united, are the prophetic spirit, the testimony of Jesus, and the "*keeping of the sayings of this book*." This prophecy can only be rightly studied for edification of heart by faith in Christ; then it reveals its light; those that hold the witness of Jesus will so far become prophets, and will understand. He "trusteth in the law, and the law is faithful

¹ See page 381.

² John xix. 35.

to him as an oracle.”³ It is remarkable also, as Bede observes, “how St. John calls himself a prophet, one of the prophets, and his book a prophecy; in like manner as he adheres throughout not only to the meaning, but to the words of Isaiah, Zechariah, and the other prophets.”

Further, it is earnestly repeated, as it was at the opening of this book,⁴ that “these things *must shortly be done;*” Christ repeats, “*Behold, I come quickly,*” and “*the time is at hand;*” and again, for the fourth time in these few verses, “*Behold, I come quickly;*” to which is added, “*and My reward is with Me;*” indicating that the coming spoken of as so speedy, is the final coming to judgment. “By the words, ‘*I come quickly,*’ either showing,” says Ecumenius, “the shortness of this present life in comparison with the next; or the suddenness to each of his own end and change.” But surely it is more in these places; it intimates the shortness of the time, in the sight of God, between the first and second coming of our Lord; of the space in which all these things occur. It is not only a short, but a broken period, as if suddenly interrupted; and this is expressed by the three years and a half, falling short of the full and perfect square, the number four, from the sudden appearing of Christ, Who shall “shorten the days;” Who “will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.”

And again, in keeping with the prophetic language of Daniel, he is commanded “*not to seal the sayings of the prophecy of this book;*” on account of the near approach of the time; for Daniel spoke of these our latter days with much time intervening before they came in:—“Wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.”⁵ And afterwards: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words,

³ Eccus. xxx. 3.

⁴ See pp. 4, 5.

⁵ Dan. viii. 26.

and seal the book, even to the time of the end.”⁶ For Daniel’s is that sealed book which is opened by “the Lion of Judah” in the Revelation. But the Apocalypse is the unsealing; it speaks not of events coming in after a long intervening period, as those of Daniel, but coming in at once; not of the last Day only, nor of that fabled Millennium to be ushered in at the last; but from the very time when they were delivered even unto the end of the world, they are fulfilling and being fulfilled.

The Apocalypse is marked by frequent recapitulation, throughout recurring to the beginning, and from thence tracing the history of the Christian Faith in various figures unto the end. The prophecy contains a continuous account of Christianity, with one exception only, that as it approaches the termination in the seventh Trumpet, there are many things which are to take place in the full development of the Christian kingdom, which were revealed to St. John, but were not by him to be taught: “Seal up those things which the seven Thunders uttered, and write them not.”⁷ This may account for many difficulties that occur to us in looking forward to that period in the prophetic account: for in attempting to elucidate the nature of the last conflict with Antichrist, there appears, as it were, a blank,—one is lost in conjecture,—what is revealed suggests so much that is left unrevealed,—so much we cannot ascertain or divine. This may have been the subject of the seven Thunders. We have an instance of the same kind, where things were once divulged to the Church, but of which no subsequent knowledge remained in this: we learn from St. John and from St. Paul that their Churches had been informed of the coming of “the wicked one,” or personal Antichrist; and that they

⁶ Dan. xii. 4.

⁷ See p. 173.

knew well of the power that withholdeth: but of these things the next generation had no knowledge,⁸ beyond this incidental allusion to truths which had been taught those early Churches. But, with the exception of this omission of the sayings of the Thunder voices, we are informed in the Apocalypse of the whole working of that hidden wickedness from the time of St. John until the unloosing of Satan and the end. "Time itself," says St. Gregory, "alone reveals that which the seven Thunders spake: for whatsoever was hidden in the beginning of Holy Church, the end clears up day by day."⁹ But St. John's prophecies are for the constant meditations of all Christians, as of immediate fulfilment and most concerning to them,—a book which the Church has affectionately clasped to her bosom, as her perpetual monitor, especially for these last days. He is the one great prophet to the Christian Church supplying what the twelve prophets were to Israel; or rather, combining them all in himself, pointing their language, and giving clear utterance to their many voices in one.

Tichonius, indeed, explains the sealing of those seven Thunders of their being hidden from the wicked; and here the "*seal them not*," as spoken for the righteous who shall understand. "For the divine Scriptures are hidden from all the proud, and from those that love the world more than God, but are opened to the humble and those that fear God." This is most true in itself, but does not explain the sealing and unsealing referred to. Cornelius à Lapide well says: "Seal not up, nor close, nor conceal these oracles; but rather write them, and expound to be read by all, because they will be profitable to all. God is wont, as is evident from Daniel, to command His Prophets

⁸ See Civ. Dei, lib. xx. cap. 19. ⁹ In Job, lib. ix. 16.

to seal up His prophecies when they refer to remote times ; as if they ought not at the time to be read, or are to be read with little understanding and profit. But when they are of times near at hand, He commands them not to be sealed, as is the case here." And Bede well observes of Dionysius of Alexandria, who so far rescued the Apocalypse to its Divine dignity, that "he applied this book to the refutation of rising heresies, and transferred the sense of the same prophecy, cleansed and cleared from all the cloud of carnal understanding, to eternal and celestial promises."

"*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still,*"—alluding to that great stumbling-block which is spoken of in these days of Antichrist, that as our Lord says, "iniquity shall abound ;" as in Daniel, "the wicked shall do wickedly ;" and as St. Paul, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." This is here announced in St. John as the permission of God by His secret judgment, having on it the seal of this His inscrutable will. It is expressive of the very mysterious and awful condition in which we appear to be placed, left so much to our own free will, and of the permission of evil. Bede says, "He here shows the hidden but just judgments of God, by which wicked men are permitted to proceed to worse and worse, *i.e.* to reach the summit of their wickedness, that they might find the just judgment. It is like that saying, 'Either make the tree good, and his fruit good ; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt.'"¹ Œcumenius,—“as declaring the free will and moral choice left to each ; let each take what he wills ; I force none.” But more than this, it is founded on that of Ezekiel : “He that heareth, let him hear ; and he that

¹ Matt. xii. 33.

forbeareth, let him forbear.”² It expresses the judgment of God as present in these things, “sending on them a strong delusion,” because they had “pleasure in unrighteousness;” hardening their hearts, and “pouring upon them the spirit of deep sleep.”³ It is an awful mystery, referring to the great consummation, which shall set its unchangeable seal on character; for to this is added, “*I come quickly, and My reward is with Me.*”

¹³ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. ¹⁴ Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the whoremongers, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

We have noticed the stillness and unspeakable peace of this final vision of the Blessed as differing from those that preceded; in like manner, now, after the description of the end of all things, may be observed how the stronger figures and symbols are dropped for a simple divine reality or plainness of speech; it is not the vision of the Son of Man clothed as the High Priest of His Church, with His face as the sun, and the like living symbols; but, “*I am the Beginning and the End:*” “*I, Jesus, have sent Mine Angel.*”

“*They that wash their robes*” seems the older and better reading; in some copies it is added, “in the Blood of the Lamb;” and others have our own, “they that do His commandments;” both of which seem as if they may have been explanations which have crept into the text. “*That they may enter in through the gates.*” Christ is Himself the gate. “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”⁴ They enter through Him by the twelve

² Ezek. iii. 27.

³ Isa. xxix. 10.

⁴ John x. 9.

gates, as doing His commandments given in His Church through His twelve Apostles. And to him that thus enters the porter openeth, "which is," says St. Augustin, "the Holy Spirit of God."⁵ "Continuing stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers," and in the "fear" of God;⁶ this is the measured pattern,—the Jerusalem of the twelve gates, which are all living pearls, "goodly pearls," and "of great price."

But "*without are the dogs*;" adhering closely throughout to the type of legal uncleanness in the ancient Jerusalem; and showing that in this will the Law be fulfilled "in spirit and in truth:" even as our Lord Himself preserved the same type: "Give not that which is holy to the *dogs*;" and St. Paul, "Beware of *dogs*."⁷ So also, *the sorcerers* and *the idolaters* are from the figures of old. Note, St. John would say, that all is fulfilled; and understand, that throughout it is all one language of scriptural and sacred mystery.

"How is it that ye do not understand?"⁸

SECTION VIII

THE CONCLUSION

CHAP. XXII. "¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent Mine Angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Every thing marks the importance of this book,—the

⁵ In Joan. Tr. xlv. 4.

⁶ Acts ii. 42, 43.

⁷ Phil. iii. 2.

⁸ Mark viii. 21.

blessing on those that read ; the book not to be sealed as speaking of what is of present concern ; and *testified* again and again, as now, to all *in the seven Churches* of Christendom, in which Christ is, even unto the end. He is the true King of Israel, "*the root and the offspring of David*," the promised Messiah, the Anointed One of the Jews : "the Root of David" which "prevailed to open the seals" (chap. v. 5) ; and at the same time also "*the bright and morning star*," arising "out of Jacob,"¹ that led the Gentiles, those kings of the East, to His rising ; "the day-star" that shall "arise in your hearts," as ye watch thus the light of Divine prophecy "shining in the dark place" of the world.²

"*The root and offspring of David* expressing," says Bede, "His twofold nature ; as our Lord pointed out to the Jews, saying, Whose son is He ? for David himself calleth Him Lord." And of this very beautiful expression, "*the morning star*," St. Gregory says, "as appearing alive after death, He became to us our morning star, while He furnished us in His own Person with an instance of resurrection, and led the way to the light that was to follow."³ "O Jerusalem, look about thee toward the East, and behold the joy that cometh unto thee from God."⁴ He is Himself the Morning Star which He will give.⁵ "The first and the last ;" for this one and same star shines the first in the evening, or the last at morning.

"*The Spirit saith, Come ;*" for by His Spirit alone in the heart can we wish for His coming ; His Spirit can alone desire, can alone prepare us for that His coming ; and

¹ Num. xxiv. 17.

² 2 Peter i. 19. Supposed by Sir Isaac Newton to refer to the Apocalypse.

³ On Job xxviii. 32.

⁴ Baruch iv. 36.

⁵ See page 38.

"*the Bride*," His Church, also in waiting, "*says, Come*,"—even as a Bride looks for the coming of her Lord, and "makes herself ready" for that coming. "They that love His appearing"⁶ is the very mark of His elect; they are ever "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."⁷ And they that are "heavy laden" also, that "*thirst* after righteousness," to which they feel that they have not attained, they also *may come*. The fountain is open,—the dispensation of the Spirit,—the free gift of the grace of God. His hand is open. Let every one come and be filled. Nothing is needed but earnestly to desire. "*Let him that is athirst come*" and drink.

"¹⁸ I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."

This anathema against adding to or diminishing from this prophecy is, like every thing else in this book, founded on the Old Testament; as Moses in the Law declared, "Whatsoever I command—thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it:"⁸—intimating the prophecy to be full and Divine. It is said of the perfections of God, "Unto Him may nothing be added, neither can He be diminished."⁹ As St. John had after his manner so strongly testified of the truth and importance of these prophecies, it is added how our Lord Himself thus set His seal to the same by these awful words. "This is

⁶ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

⁷ 2 Peter iii. 12.

⁸ Deut. xii. 32.

⁹ Ecclus. xlii. 21.

said not of expositors," says Berengaudus,¹ "but of heretics." So likewise Bede.

It is this Book of the Apocalypse which is thus stamped. Yet the words are more extensive, and serve to set the Divine seal on all the Scriptures. And thus it is taken by Cornelius à Lapide, as "spoken of heretics who will adulterate by adding or diminishing either the Apocalypse, or the sacred Scriptures of which it is the end, as it were, and close. He does not find fault with laws Apostolical or Ecclesiastical which are added to the Divine, and to the Gospel, for they are not added as Divine laws or Scripture, but as human."

It would not be in character with the mystery and weight of this Book, not to understand that these words must be prophetic of danger, and convey a caution of great moment. It will be sufficient to observe that there are at present two vast comprehensive systems bearing on the future, and both apparently allied to infidelity, and bringing in the great spirit of "lawlessness" both at first professing to be opposite systems, but mutually aiding each other and converging. The one of these adds to the Volume of Inspiration, as interpreted by the Primitive Church; the other detracts from it. But here, in the anathemas of the Apocalypse, there is a distinction between the two: the punishment attached to the former is of their being visited with the "*plagues written in this book*," such are mostly judgments in this life, as those on Babylon; the other is that of being shut out from "*the tree of life*," the final wrath on those that belong to "the son of perdition." But to "*add*" is often equivalent to "*taking away*;" and the "*plagues written in this book*"

¹ This writer's commentary is found in St. Ambrose's works; that of Tichonius in St. Augustin's.

are consummated in the final perdition to which they lead, and of which it also speaks.

“²⁰ He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with all the Saints.* Amen.”

The last words of St. John, and prayer for the speedy coming of his Lord, at once brings to mind the mysterious account in his Gospel; “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” This was fulfilled, perhaps, in some sense in his living till the coming of his Lord in the destruction of Jerusalem: but this could scarcely be all that was meant; nor could the fact of his being the one great inspired Prophet of all the intervening period till his Lord’s last coming be the thing intended; he seems to represent the Israel of God in some manner, waiting for Christ. But it is unexplained. He does not, we may observe, speak like St. Paul of departing “to be with Christ,” but of Christ’s coming to him, as if mindful of those His words; “If I will that he remain till I come.”

To this, his last prayer and blessing, may be added St. John’s own words; “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”²

² 1 John ii. 28.



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